

THE RESTON

LETTER

Thousands visit Multicultural Festival at Town Center



Reston Community Center’s Multicultural Festival drew more than 12,000 attendees to Reston Town Center on Sept. 20. A lineup of elected officials spoke at the opening ceremony after the South Lakes High School JROTC color guard presented the colors and "The Star-Spangled Banner" was performed by South Lakes Chorus.

There were 40 vendors and nonprofit booths and three stages. Performers included the Howard University Choir, National Heritage Fellows Shaka Zulu and Peniel Guerrier, and master performers from the Virginia Folklife Program. The festival was in partnership with Reston Town Center Association and co-hosted at Reston Town Center by BXP.

Photo by Sol Street Photography

‘Building Bridges’ sculpture unveiled as JW Marriott opens at Reston Station

By Dawn Crosson, Editor

The new JW Marriott at Reston Station hosted a Sept. 15 reception to unveil the sculpture outside its doors and to showcase its in-house restaurant, The Simon, to community leaders. The following day, JW Marriott, the region’s largest luxury event space, officially opened to the public.

Italian artist Lorenzo Quinn spoke at the unveiling of his sculpture, “Building Bridges,” a replica of his monumental work of the same name in Venice, Italy. The piece depicts six sets of hands joined in pairs. “I create work to go beyond decorative,” Quinn said. “I want this sculpture to spread love and to make us realize that, really, skin-deep we are all the same. It doesn’t matter where we come from or our background—it’s important to work together to bring the world together. There are so many wonderful, good-hearted people who need to work together to make this a better world. When we work together, humanity achieves greatness.”

In Venice, “Building Bridges” forms a 50-foot-high archway spanning a canal. The version at JW Marriott, next to VIDA Fitness, is on a smaller scale, but adds another striking piece of public art to Reston’s landscape.

This is not Quinn’s first work on display in Reston. His “Forces of Nature” sculpture stands just across the street in



The sculpture "Building Bridges" is Reston's newest public art, and was dedicated by the Italian sculptor on Sept. 15. Photo by Benjamin Burgess

the plaza. Its presence is especially fitting: Quinn’s best friend, who purchased his very first sculpture 40 years ago, lives in Reston. “He always believed in me, always pushed me,” Quinn said. “I was ecstatic to find that Reston wanted to bring my work to the same town where my friend lives.”

Quinn emphasized the collaborative effort behind the installation. “This is a culmination of a lot of work from a lot of people,” he said. “I might have had the idea, I might have created it, but it takes

a big team to put this together. It really is building bridges. When we work together, when we believe in each other, we can create wonderful things.”

For Quinn, public art belongs to the people. “If it’s public, it’s exactly that—for the public. For people of all walks of life, all backgrounds. It’s not mine anymore. The moment it’s here, it’s not mine—it’s yours. I want people to interact with the sculpture.” He noted that a marriage proposal was scheduled to take place under the hands later that week.

bulletin



Reston native's broadcasting career, Walk to End Alzheimer's, FABB 20th anniversary, a thank you to Liz Kamp, new art exhibits, Corsica Wine Bar opens

sports



Girls flag football hits FCPS, new HHS football coach brings new culture and Herndon wins the Baron Cameron Bowl vs. South Lakes

education



Making an Impact, Siena School feature, get help with a Reston college essay tutor, upcoming Sylvan Learning Center open house, AVID event, STEM2Youth at South Lakes

kids



History of Halloween, scary book recommendations, leaf art, a Reston mad lib, festive recipe, expert advice on face painting

opinions

Thank you to The Reston Letter, Restonian's hotel suggestions, Greenfare is back with food advice on what not to eat

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1

THE BULLETIN

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

FABB celebrates 20 years of advocacy for safer, easier biking

By Gene Powell, Staff Writer

The Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling (FABB) is celebrating 20 years of making cycling safer, easier, and more enjoyable for Fairfax County residents. Founded in 2005, the volunteer-run nonprofit has worked with county officials and community partners on initiatives ranging from bike-friendly development and long-term planning to safety education.

To mark its anniversary, FABB will host a public celebration at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 25, at Patsy's American, 8051 Leesburg Pike, Vienna.

President Joy Faunce points to safer streets, expanded trails, and greater awareness of cycling's benefits as among the group's proudest accomplishments. She noted that FABB also ensures cyclists' needs are considered during county planning and development reviews.

One recent success was advocacy for the two-mile George Snyder Trail, a multi-use path running from Chain Bridge Road and the I-66 Trail in the west to the Wilcoxson and Gerry Connolly Cross County Trails in the east. After several attempts to scale back the project, the City of Fairfax approved the full plan on June 10.

FABB leaders describe the new trail as more than just a route for cyclists. It

will connect neighborhoods, schools, parks, and shops—"a vital spine in the region's active transportation network" that reflects the organization's mission.

Bruce Wright, who co-founded FABB with his late wife, Kerie Hitt, recalled that one of the group's earliest projects was mapping bike facilities across Fairfax County to help riders navigate the area. Later, FABB pushed for the county's first Bicycle Master Plan, adopted in 2014, which now guides officials in incorporating bike lanes and trails into future development. The 2025 county bike map is available at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/bike/map.

Wright sees safe cycling as a "simple solution to a lot of problems." He cites its carbon-neutral role in addressing climate change, its potential to reduce traffic congestion, and its contributions to both physical fitness and mental health.

Both Faunce and Wright stressed that advocacy is a long-term effort. Faunce said one of her priorities is to continue and honor the work of FABB's early leaders. Looking ahead, Wright identified key challenges, including disconnected trails and bike lanes that are too narrow or located along busy roads.

FABB also promotes the Fairfax County Bicycle & Pedestrian Ambassador Program, a volunteer initiative of the Fairfax County Department of



On Oct. 25 the volunteer-run non-profit Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling (FABB) will celebrate 20 years of making cycling safer, easier, and more enjoyable in our county. The alliance was founded by Restonian Bruce Wright and his late wife Kerie Hitt. Photo contributed by Bruce Wright

Transportation. Ambassadors encourage safe biking and walking, share updates on new infrastructure, and provide on-the-spot help such as basic maintenance, safety tips, and route planning.

In addition, FABB has urged members and the 3,000-plus subscribers to its newsletter to help update the Virginia Department of Transportation's annual Bicycle Facility Inventory Map by reporting changes. As of June, the inventory listed 1,614 miles of shared-use paths, 986 lane miles of bicycle lanes, 484 lane miles of shared-lane markings and local bike routes, and 7.5 miles of sidewalk connectors.

For 20 years, FABB has been a persistent voice for cyclists across Fairfax County. Its leaders say the next decades will bring both challenges and opportunities, but the mission remains the same: safer streets, better connections, and a more bike-friendly community.

"As we celebrate this milestone, we're reminded that progress doesn't happen overnight," Faunce said. "It takes dedication and persistence. Our vision is a Fairfax where biking is safe and accessible for everyone—and we're going to keep working until we get there."

Reston, Virginia

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2025

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Reston ASSOCIATION

Together we make Reston great

Walking together toward a world without Alzheimer's

By Kaydence Smith, Staff Writer

Every year, hundreds gather at Reston Town Center for the Walk to End Alzheimer's, the world's largest fundraiser for Alzheimer's care and research. Hosted by the Alzheimer's Association, the walk is more than a community event; it's a chance for families and friends to stand together against a disease that affects millions.

For Jill McCarroll, captain of Helen's Hikers and a member of the Community Engagement Committee (CEC), the walk has been personal from the beginning. She founded Helen's Hikers in 2007 in memory of her grandmother, who faced a long journey with Alzheimer's. Since then, she has walked every year, earning Champion Club and Elite Grand Champion fundraising honors along the way. Now, Jill helps spread awareness by organizing kickoff events, partnering with local restaurants, and leading outreach with the CEC. This year, she walks in memory of her grandmother Helen and family friend Laura Emch, and in honor of her husband's grandmother Candy.

Tracy Cheifetz, a board member of the Alzheimer's Association National Capital Area Chapter and Executive Leadership Team Community Engagement Chair for the Northern Virginia Walk, also has a deeply personal reason for participating. Her mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's at age 69. Tracy and her family cared for her for eight years, experiencing firsthand the toll the disease takes on those living with it and their loved ones. In 2021, she co-founded her team, Amy's Army. Tracy also



Photos of 2024 Walk to End Alzheimer's at Reston Town Center
Courtesy of Alzheimer's Association National Capital Area Chapter

facilitates a monthly caregiver support group in Fair Lakes, offering encouragement and resources to others navigating the same challenges.

At the heart of the Walk is the Promise Garden Ceremony, where participants hold flowers in colors that represent their connection to the disease: blue for those living with Alzheimer's, purple in memory of a loved one, yellow for caregivers, and orange for supporters. A single white flower is raised to symbolize the hope of a future without Alzheimer's. Both Jill and Tracy spoke about the emotional impact of this ceremony, which captures both the heartbreak and the hope that define the fight.

Participation in the walk is free, and anyone can register as an individual or as part of a team. While fundraising is encouraged, simply showing up to walk and share the experience makes a difference. Funds raised support vital re-



search, educational initiatives, and resources such as the Association's 24/7 helpline and caregiver programs.

This year, Reston's Walk to End Alzheimer's takes place Sunday morning, Oct. 12, at Reston Town Center. Join a team, start one of your own, or make a donation by visiting alz.org/walk.

THE BULLETIN

From Reston roots to the Hall of Fame: South Lakes alumnus honored for broadcasting career

By Ellyn Wexler, Staff Writer

A hometown kid who once filled notebooks with sports stats and stories will be honored on Saturday, Nov. 1, when WAER at Syracuse University inducts broadcaster Andrew Siciliano into its Hall of Fame.

Siciliano grew up in Reston and graduated from South Lakes High School in 1992. His parents, Abbey and Stephen, still live in the community where they remember him as a boy who could talk endlessly about games and players.

“Yes, I was obsessed,” he recalled. “I listened to baseball games every night on my clock radio or Walkman, spent every dollar I made mowing lawns or babysitting on baseball cards, and always aspired to do something in sports. Long before the Red Zone Channel, I bounced between every baseball game on the radio anywhere on the East Coast.”

At South Lakes, Siciliano covered teams for the school’s Sentinel newspaper. Although he didn’t play beyond Little League, he already had his sights set on Syracuse University’s Newhouse School of Journalism. “I wouldn’t be here without Syracuse,” he said. “Newhouse didn’t teach you how to be a sportscast-

er, but it puts you in a hyper-competitive environment with like-minded people.”

Freshman year, he auditioned for WAER and was accepted. Soon he was calling play-by-play for basketball, football, and lacrosse, including Syracuse’s 1996 NCAA Tournament run. “I spent nearly every day of my college life at that station,” he said. “I made friends for life. Professional awards are nice—this means more.”

His professional career launched in Chicago, covering the Bears for WMAQ-670 AM and earning multiple AIR Awards. From there, he moved to Los Angeles, co-hosting on Fox Sports Radio and calling Arena Football League games.

In 2005, Siciliano became the host of DIRECTV’s Red Zone Channel. For 18 seasons, fans came to know his rapid-fire updates as he whipped around NFL action. “Bringing the Red Zone Channel to air and helping to innovate the concept of live sports television whip-around shows” is one of his proudest achievements, he said.

Along the way, he anchored NFL Network programs, covered the Super Bowl and Draft, and won an Emmy for NBC’s Olympic Gold Zone coverage. In



Andrew Siciliano broadcasts from the Paris Olympics at NBC’s Gold Zone. Photo courtesy of Andrew Siciliano

2024, he became the radio voice of the Cleveland Browns, succeeding longtime broadcaster Jim Donovan in 2024.

WAER Director of Development Tracy Caryl called his journey from student broadcaster to national voice “a clear testament to his hard work and passion.” She also praised his dedication to mentoring students, reviewing tapes, offering critiques, and funding equipment and travel. “His career is a model for our students,” she said. “We are honoring him not just for what he has accomplished, but for how he has inspired the next generation. He also just happens to be a really great, down-to-earth guy.”

For his parents, the Hall of Fame induction is a moment of pride not only for their son, but also for the Reston community that nurtured his early dreams—a journey that began with a clock radio in his bedroom and now echoes in stadiums across the country.



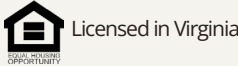
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A salute to New Trail Cycling founder Liz Kamp

By Katy Keffer, Reston resident

Members of New Trail Cycling—now REPFIT Studio at Lake Anne—wish to honor New Trail founder Liz Kamp with this tribute.

Curious to know what discipline sounds like? It’s the click of a cycling shoe locking into a Schwinn pedal. The smell of accomplishment? Eucalyptus-scented, chilled towels pressed across a forehead after 45 minutes of spinning. And the face of motivation? That was Liz Kamp—Reston resident, fitness trainer, entrepreneur, and founder of New Trail Cycling & Strength.

Liz was the one-woman wonder behind New Trail, a boutique fitness studio tucked between a museum and a hair salon along the curve of Lake Anne Plaza. When she announced last July that she was selling the studio to new owners, members were surprised but quickly rallied to celebrate and support her bold decision to begin a new life chapter. In her message to the community, Liz explained the decision came “from a place of deep care.”

What Liz built was more than an exercise studio—it was a community. She created a welcoming space where people of all fitness levels felt accepted and inspired. Music-filled spin classes brought energy and joy, while strength training, yoga, Pilates, and conditioning classes made health and wellness a priority.

Drawing on more than 20 years of fitness experience, Liz opened New Trail in 2018 with the vision of developing the best in people in an environment

that was supportive, welcoming, and nonjudgmental. She understood that gyms can sometimes feel intimidating, sterile, or impersonal, and set out to make something different. Early member Stacy C. recalled how Liz kept that spirit alive even through the pandemic: “What really inspired me about New Trail was how Liz kept it going during COVID. She rolled the bikes out to Lake Anne Plaza and put mats on the bricks for strength classes. It helped us through those stressful early months.”

Others found similar inspiration. Tim C. joined within months of opening and loved how music made classes immersive: “It’s easy to get lost in class and imagine myself out on a bike, on the roads.” In her late 70s, Edie A. discovered New Trail after Gold’s Gym closed and soon reached her 500th class on New Year’s Day 2025. “A woman-owned business at Lake Anne—it was a major part of Reston’s history,” she said. Merrill L. pointed to the friendships she made: “The strong community Liz built made exercise fun. Liz’s intention workshop created a space that encouraged me to slow down, reflect, and become more mindful.” Kevin O. echoed the joy of camaraderie: “New Trail allowed me to be myself by letting me clap, sing, and whoop when the mood struck!”

Members agree that Liz’s gift for attracting the right instructors and studio coordinators set New Trail apart. Each brought unique energy, warmth, and encouragement, helping to foster a sense of belonging that kept the community strong.

Although Liz has passed the keys



Liz Kamp, founder of New Trail Cycling, has sold her studio to REPFIT.

to new owners, she plans to remain connected to the health and wellness world through her personal training clients. New Trail is now REPFIT Studio at Lake Anne, led by Jen Dryzga and Rony Polanco, local fitness leaders and owners of REPFIT in Herndon. They inherit a devoted community of cyclists and strength enthusiasts who thrive on cheers, fist bumps, and in-person connection at a time when so much of life has shifted online.

We may have a new name, but the heart of this community remains the same—energetic, supportive, and ready to welcome anyone who wants to ride, move, and grow stronger together.

Katy Keffer, a freelance writer living in Reston, is proud to have been a two-plus year member of New Trail. She is now excited to be part of REPFIT’s expanded fitness community.

THE RESTON LETTER

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THE BULLETIN

Julia Malakoff brings 'The Poetry of Everyday Things' to Reston

Contributed by Reston Art Gallery

Julia Malakoff’s solo exhibition, “The Poetry of Everyday Things,” will be on view at Reston Art Gallery and Studios at Lake Anne Plaza from Oct. 4 through Oct. 31.

Malakoff’s art is inspired by the ordinary objects that surround her daily life—wild-life outside her studio window, a whimsical pink chair discovered in a thrift store, and the dancing shadows of houseplants. “I delight in the satisfying balance of neutral colors against more vibrant hues,” she explains. She observes everything with fresh eyes, translating color, angle, shade, and detail onto her canvas.

“Not confined to any one category or mood, my subjects in their original form range from classic beauty to quirky, from natural to man-made,” says Malakoff. “Close observation reveals their essence as well as unexpected connections, which

then serve to inform my art.”

Her colorful, mixed-media work offers a joyful experience for viewers of all ages. She combines acrylic paint and oil pastels, often incorporating found and hand-painted papers—including pages from old, damaged books—as well as cardboard from shipping boxes. These embedded materials add texture and dimension to her pieces.

“Vases are a favorite everyday object, and I enjoy crafting vessels from my stash of cardboard, layering paints and glazes to suggest a genuine ceramic surface,” she notes.

Malakoff sees her art as visual poetry. “Just as a poem employs selected language to convey meaning, my art utilizes color, texture, line, and form to portray the unique essence of everyday objects in my life and their kinship to each other. Everyday things no longer appear ordinary and unrelated. Everyday things are my poetic musings.”



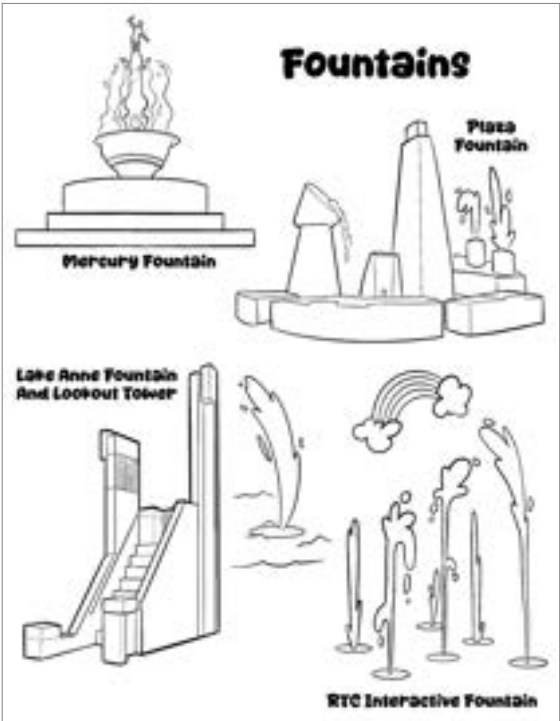
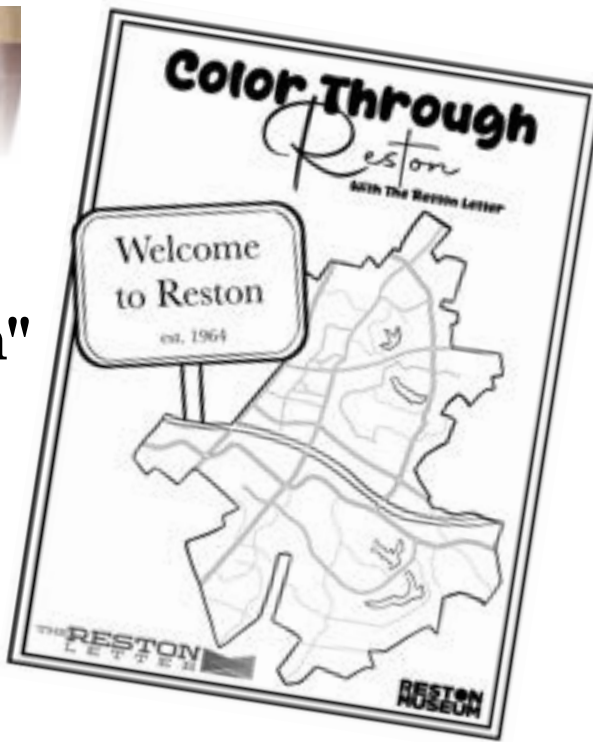
Julia Malakoff art photos contributed by Reston Art Gallery



Coming in November: The Reston Letter's "Color Through Reston" coloring book!

The Reston Letter is excited to announce the upcoming publication of our very own Reston coloring book! One of our staff writers, who is a Restonian and a talented artist, has been hard at work creating a coloring book especially for our youngest Reston artists and their adults. This book will be available for purchase around town in time for the holidays and online as a downloadable file.

All proceeds from sales will go to keeping local journalism alive in Reston. We will feature classic Reston landmarks and businesses in the coloring book, with QR codes to websites for these cornerstones of Reston. Please reach out if you are interested in being a sponsor of the book, and fill out our interest form to be updated with prices, locations to purchase, and important dates. We plan to print the book mid-November, just in time for the holidays and that special little artist in your life!



Scan for more information on The Reston Letter's coloring book





OCTOBER 10 - NOVEMBER 1

PERFORMANCES AT
RESTON COMMUNITY CENTER
WWW.RESTONPLAYERS.ORG

Dear Readers,

Autumn is here! It’s a hot one so far, but the leaves are falling around us, and the bright red and yellow mums and pumpkins have popped up on porches around town. I’ve narrowly escaped falling acorns several times the past few days, and it’s getting dark earlier and earlier. It’s a good time to curl up with a newspaper.

Last spring, I visited a man in Newberg, Oregon, who started a newspaper in his small town in wine country right around the same time I started The Letter. My brother, a professor in Newberg, introduced us. Of course we holed up in that hipster Oregon coffeeshop and talked for hours about all we’ve discovered along our journeys.

He gave me the idea for the community coloring book fundraiser that we launched; it will print next month. He calls his newspaper “community-supported” which is the perfect term to give to our paper as well. All of my writers, editors, and photographers are volunteers. I’m a full-time high school teacher, and I’ve been able to hire several young professionals to help with creative design and marketing on a part-time basis. Residents and schools and businesses send their news to me to print. People reach out to write about things they care about.

This October marks three years since I filed for my LLC. It has been a good and important three years, but also difficult. Each month, printing and shipping alone costs over \$8,000 itself, and on top of that, there are other monthly expenses and my independent contractors to pay. Thus far, we’ve been able to survive, but it’s only because of the generosity of community members who believe in our mission and either advertise or contribute with their talents (and those amazing ones who do both!).

If you enjoy having local news in your mailbox and at your fingertips, please consider donating to keep local journalism alive in Reston and free to all residents. My least favorite part about this job I created for myself is asking people for money, but it’s a necessary part. As we head into a season of gratitude and giving, please consider a one-time donation or setting up a monthly auto-pay, as some readers have done.

Enjoy all we have included in our October issue, and spread the word about our important mission!

Dawn Crosson
Owner/Editor

Scan to donate



THE BULLETIN

Wine, light bites, and lively nights await at Corsica

Corsica Wine Bar offers tastes of the Mediterranean coast

By Ellyn Wexler, Staff Writer

Reston Town Center has a new destination for wine lovers and small-plate enthusiasts with the recent opening of Corsica Wine Bar, located at 11950 Democracy Drive in the former Mon Ami Gabi space.

From the team behind Barcelona Wine Bar, a longtime favorite at the Town Center, Corsica offers a fresh take on European coastal flavors in a lively, welcoming setting. “Reston Town Center really feels like a dream spot for us,” said General Manager Lauren Brown. “If you love Barcelona, you’ll feel right at home at Corsica. It’s that same sense of excitement—being in a room buzzing with people, trying new things, and just having fun.”

Unlike the formality some associate with French dining, Corsica is designed as an approachable, let-your-hair-down space. Creative Director Drew McConnell describes it as “a bar and restaurant where escapist small-plates, intentional design, and an approachable wine list transport guests to the rustic Mediterranean coast. We’re bringing European apéro culture to Northern Virginia.”

“Apéro,” short for apéritif, refers to a social ritual in France and other cultures involving drinks and light snacks before a meal, designed to unwind, socialize, and “open the palate” for the upcoming dinner or lunch.

With its energetic atmosphere, shareable menu, and adventurous beverage program, Corsica is already shaping up to be a new favorite gathering spot in Reston Town Center—whether for after-work drinks, a romantic dinner, or a night of exploring Mediterranean

flavors with friends.

Guests can choose their own vibe: multiple dining rooms, a lively bar, a 75-seat wrap-around patio, and even a Chef’s Counter where guests can sit just outside the open kitchen. A private dining room accommodates 20 for special gatherings. The decor combines terracotta tiles, custom leather booths, eclectic serve ware, and McConnell’s own large-scale art and photography inspired by travels along the French and Italian coasts.

In the kitchen, Executive Chef Cesar Mayorga fires up focusing on Mediterranean-inspired dishes prepared with local and seasonal ingredients. Many are cooked over the restaurant’s open-flame robata grill, giving everything from vegetables to seafood a rustic char. “Everything on the menu is designed for adventurous eating and sharing,” Mayorga said. “Our Chicken Genovese with Agliata Verde is inspired by Genoa, where pesto was invented, and it’s so fresh and vibrant the green practically explodes off the plate.”

Menu highlights include Tuna Carpaccio with Calabrian chile, Barbajuan, a pastry stuffed with Swiss chard and ricotta that is popular in Monaco; Mussels L’aziminu in saffron-lobster broth; hearty Baked Lumache pasta, and the Apericena platter, a selection of small bites meant for the bar crowd. All menu items can be customized to individual food allergies, intolerances, and other dietary needs and preferences. Prices generally range from \$12 to \$15, making it easy to mix and match.

Corsica’s wine program features more than 200 bottles, with a focus on France, Italy, and the island of Corsica. Developed by Beverage Director Emily Nevin-Giannini,



Reston Town Center's new Corsica Wine Bar is open for business in the former Mon Ami Gabi space.
Photo by Benjamin Burgess

the list emphasizes small producers, women-led wineries, and biodynamic practices. “The wines on our list are crafted by farmers, not factories,” McConnell explained. Guests can order three- or six-ounce pours, or try a \$5 “Spruzzo” (splash) tasting portion. On Mondays, every bottle—no matter the rarity or price—is offered at half off.

The cocktail program also leans into Mediterranean traditions, offering lighter, lower-alcohol drinks meant to pair well with food. Options include the Clericot, a citrusy, wine-based cocktail, and the Golden Hour Negroni, made with spiced gin and sherry. Seasonal offerings will rotate throughout the year, including cocktails infused with Corsican herbs.

Brown noted Corsica will also host special events, such as wine tastings designed to feel more like lively parties than formal classes. “We’re looking forward to bringing our friends and neighbors together to discover what they love about wine,” she added.

Corsica Wine Bar isn’t just a place to eat and drink—it’s an invitation to linger, laugh, and raise a glass, Mediterranean style.

bêheld performs at Unitarian Universalist Church



Photo provided by Cynthia Young

By UUC Music Director Cynthia Young

The women’s vocal ensemble bêheld presented a program of songs centered on justice, freedom, truth, and hope on Sept. 27 at the Unitarian Universalist Church [UCCR] in Reston.

The event drew strong support, raising more than \$3,200 from attendees. The church will make a contribution to Cornerstones, the Reston-based nonprofit that provides support, advocacy, and community-building for individuals and families. UUCR has partnered with Cornerstones for decades as part of its ongoing commitment to community service.

In Loving Memory *Susan Williams*

Susan Williams, 78, of Reston passed away on Sept. 9 at Cobbledale Assisted Living in Fairfax, VA after a battle with dementia.

Born in Pittsfield, Mass., on Nov. 18, 1946, she moved to Northfield, N.J. in 1948 and lived there until after she graduated from Immaculata University in 1968. She completed an internship with the Public Health Service in Staten Island, N.Y., in 1969 and soon thereafter moved to Houston, Texas where she lived and worked until 1987 when she moved to Reston to be nearer to family.

Susan worked as a dietician throughout her career in Texas and then in Virginia until she

retired in 2016. She loved living in Reston and resided there for 39 years. Susan enjoyed traveling with friends in the United States and Europe, enjoying several river cruises and exploring new locations whenever visiting them.

Susan was predeceased by her parents: John E. Williams and Anne B. Williams. She is survived by her sisters Jane Williams of Reston, and Joanne Williams of Herndon, her nephew Brian Loux (Amber Jaycocks) and her nieces, Emily Jarding (Andrew) and Megan Loux.

Burial will take place in New Jersey at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts can be made to Goodwin



Hospice (c/o Goodwin Living Foundation, 4800 Fillmore Ave., Alexandria, VA 22311) or online at www.goodwinliving.org/giving/donation-form-hospice.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

10 OCT Richard O'Brien's "The Rocky Horror Show" Times vary. Event through 11/1. Content warning: 1975 film based on the play is rated R. Reston Community Center at Hunters Woods	11 OCT Fall Wellness Fair 10 a.m. Free family-friendly event to help you take charge of your well-being. Reston Community Center at Hunters Woods	11 OCT Rocktoberfest 4:30-10 p.m. Sip 'n Stroll and bands Smash Mouth headlines at 8:30 p.m.	12 OCT Walk to End Alzheimer's 8:30 a.m. Reston Town Center
14 OCT Taproom Theology 6:30-8:30 p.m. by Restoration Reston UMC. Lake Anne Brewhouse	15 OCT Pumpkin Giveaway 9 a.m.-noon. Coffee, cider, donuts by Watts Fine Homes and The Reston Letter. Oakbrook Church (across from Home Depot)	17 OCT Big Fun for Little Ones 10 a.m. Free, drop-in event. Kids, ages 1 to 5, can bounce on fun indoor inflatables. Reston Community Center at Hunters Woods	18 OCT Halloween Family Fun Day 12 p.m. Dress in your favorite costume! One man band and magician. Ages infant to 8. Registration required, Reston Community Center at Hunters Woods
18 OCT Howl-o-ween 1 p.m. Dog costume contests, music, raffles, tasty food and drinks. https://www.reston.org/calendar.aspx?EID=1063 1525 Brown's Chapel Road	18 OCT 22nd Anniversary Tasting Event 1-5 p.m. Help celebrate 22 years with four tasting tables and 20+ wines! Anniversary discounts. Wine Cabinet, North Point	22 OCT Senior Movie Day 9:15 a.m. FREE movie. Reston Town Center's LOOK Dine-In Cinemas	22 OCT Pressed Flower Pumpkins 5:30 p.m. Festive fall evening. The Farm at Halley Rise. 12010 Sunrise Valley Dr
24 OCT Halloween House and Trick-or-Treat Trail 5:45 p.m. 10/24 and 10/25. Walker Nature Center	25 OCT Art and Craft Fair 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Handmade items from local artists and crafters. United Christian Parish	25 OCT 2025 Reston Home Tour 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Self-guided tour of seven properties. Tickets at the Reston Museum or The Wine Cabinet	1 NOV Thanksgiving Drive 2025 Event through 11/26. Non-perishable food and essentials can be dropped at Reston Community Centers: Lake Anne & Hunters Woods

LIFETIME

Why surgery isn't always the answer for knee pain after 50

Contributed by Taruna Rijhwani,
Health Watchers PT

As a movement specialist working with adults over 50, I've seen more and more patients walk into my clinic convinced they're on an inevitable path to knee surgery. They've been told their MRIs show arthritis or "bone-on-bone" changes, and naturally, they assume replacement is the only option.

That's not always true. In fact, fewer than 5% of the active adults I see with these MRI findings actually require surgery. The other 95% need a completely different approach, one that



"I thought my back pain was part of getting older...But I was wrong."

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addresses mobility, strength, flexibility, and lifestyle. And more often than not, it works.

Understanding What's Really Going On

Most of the adults I work with—typically in the 50+ or 65+ age groups—come in because their knees feel stiff, painful, and unreliable. Walking long distances, climbing stairs, getting off the floor, or hiking trails they once loved begins to feel difficult or even risky.

These concerns are real. But the problem isn't always the joint itself. More often, it's tightness in the soft tissues and joint capsule, which limits how well the knee can move and function. When mobility is restricted, the rest of the body compensates, creating more pain, instability, and even fear of falling.

That's why the first step is restoring full range of motion in the knee joint—making sure it bends and extends properly during walking, stairs, and other weight-bearing activities. Once that motion returns, pain often decreases and function improves dramatically.

Using Regenerative Therapies

At our clinic, we also use a cutting-edge modality called shock-wave therapy, sometimes referred to as regenerative or extracorporeal

wave therapy. This treatment delivers targeted pulses that stimulate your body's natural healing mechanisms, promoting repair of cartilage and surrounding soft tissues. Combined with mobility work, patients often notice measurable improvements in both pain and function within weeks.

Why Strength Alone Isn't Enough

You've probably heard that strength training is key for joint health—and it is. But how you activate your muscles matters just as much as building strength.

I often see patients who walk daily, go to the gym, or take fitness classes yet still struggle with knee pain. The issue? They're not engaging the right muscles at the right time. Weak core muscles, inactive glutes, and underutilized quads and hamstrings force the knee joint to absorb more stress than it should.

We retrain movement patterns so muscles fire in the correct sequence. Whether you're climbing stairs or hiking trails, properly activating your core, glutes, quads, and hamstrings can dramatically reduce strain on the knees.

Treating the Whole Person

For many patients—especially women during or after menopause—knee health is about more than joints and muscles. Hormonal changes, bone

density loss (osteopenia or osteoporosis), nutrition, and sleep all affect pain, healing, and mobility.

That's why we take a whole-person approach. We assess protein intake, recovery habits, and overall wellness. Often, small adjustments in these areas accelerate healing and build resilience far more than any single treatment on its own.

Final Thoughts

Knee surgery can be life-changing for the right person, but it's not the default solution for everyone. Before considering invasive procedures, I encourage anyone with knee pain to explore a comprehensive, non-surgical approach. By focusing on mobility, proper muscle activation, flexibility, alignment, and whole-body health, we help patients move better, feel better, and return to the activities they love—confidently and pain-free.

Want More Help?

If you'd like to learn more about knee joint issues and non-invasive ways to improve mobility, join us for our upcoming workshop: "Move Freely Again: Practical Strategies for Lasting Knee Support" at 10 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 1.

If you can't attend, call or text us at 571-308-8252 to apply for a Complimentary Discovery Visit.

6

EDUCATION

Making an Impact

By Chuck Cascio, Author and Former South Lakes Teacher

Peter Muwonge, a 1995 graduate of South Lakes High School, has very distinct memories of what impacted him most when he settled in Reston after moving to the U.S. from Uganda with his parents in 1988. "Growing up in such a diverse and international community instilled in me a genuine comfort with, and curiosity about, people from all walks of life," he says. "It's a mindset that can't simply be taught. It comes from living in a place where cultural diversity is the norm."

That mindset helped launch a commitment in Peter that has fueled his career in finance over the past 25 years, ultimately leading him to establish Muwonge Capital Advisors in 2014. At the core of what drives him is his determination to help businesses and individuals "navigate what can often be a hostile or confusing environment when it comes to raising capital, positioning themselves for growth, or planning for an eventual exit."

Peter's undergraduate work at Duke University led to a degree in Environmental Science and Policy, which may seem a bit removed from the finance field. However, Peter's logic in choosing that field is

Peter Muwonge

what led him to his MBA at Georgetown University. "I chose Environmental Science and Policy because I've always had a strong interest in emerging markets, particularly in agribusiness," he says, "and I wanted a program that combined the scientific aspects with business and policy considerations."

After earning his two degrees, Peter began working in First Virginia Bank's management training program. With the support and encouragement of his supervisor, Peter moved on to Morgan Stanley, where he became directly engaged in corporate financing. These experiences created in Peter a realization that has driven him over the years and ultimately led to him forming his own company. "What first drew me in was the opportunity to solve complex problems for people who were already working hard to better themselves," he says. "Finance gave me a way to combine problem-solving with innovation and to stay at the forefront of new ideas across diverse industries."

Since then, Peter has expanded upon that diversity and the commitment to helping others achieve their financial goals: "What has motivated me most is working with ethical business owners and being able to help guide them

through various processes that lead to the real impact on their businesses. That has been deeply rewarding."

The breadth of Peter's experience has engaged him in multiple areas of finance including—among many others—underwriting loan syndications and other transactions of \$8.65 billion, and negotiations on behalf of the U.S. Government of over \$500 million with heads of state from Ghana, Madagascar, Mozambique, and elsewhere. He now has a very specific area that he and his team want to impact—helping build the Certified Public Accountant field.

"The accounting profession is at a crossroads," Peter says. "More Baby Boomer CPAs are retiring than there are young professionals entering the field, creating a crisis that is accelerating automation and consolidation, often at the expense of service quality and personalized client relationships. I'm engaging CPA firms nationwide, helping them specialize their service lines, strengthen market positioning, monetize their networks, and explore creative funding strategies."

Peter resides in Reston, and he continues one of his favorite activities from his teenage years: riding his bicycle, especially "mountain biking through Lake



Peter Muwonge

Fairfax Park, which I find to be both a physical challenge and a spiritual escape. I always loved riding my bike throughout Reston's extensive trail system, which gave me a sense of independence and freedom."

He also remains very aware of the Reston environment, and is pleased with the direction in which it is headed, noting "how thoughtfully designed Reston's recreational spaces are" as well as "watching the growth of Reston Town Center over the years, as it has become a vibrant hub for the community."

So, Peter continues to show that an awareness of the environment combined with a commitment to financial integrity does make an impact.

Turning student stories into standout college essays

By Ellyn Wexler, Staff Writer

Elizabeth Levy has spent her career helping students open doors to higher education. After more than three decades as a guidance counselor in Michigan, she now calls Reston home—and has brought her passion for guiding students through the college application process with her.

Levy relocated to Reston this past March from Ann Arbor, where she retired after 35 years in public schools. She served as a guidance counselor and led school-to-work programs, experiences that shaped her commitment to helping young people define their futures. "I particularly remember helping students navigate the college application process and seeing their excitement when they received their acceptance letters," Levy said. "That feeling never gets old."

Not ready to step away after retirement, Levy launched her own business, Essay Help for Colleges, assisting high school juniors, seniors, and transfer students with their Common Application and supplemental essays. She works with students across the country and abroad via Zoom, focusing on organization, deadlines, and crafting essays that capture each student's unique voice.

"I noticed a real need for personalized guidance," Levy said. "Many students have amazing stories but struggle to express them effectively. My counseling background taught me how to connect with students, understand their strengths, and guide them through a complex process."

Levy also serves as an advisor for the University of Michigan's Wolverine Pathways Program, which supports first-generation students from under-resourced communities. Through the program, she



Elizabeth Levy is new to Reston, Photo contributed by Levy

helps rising seniors complete the Common Application in time for early decision, early action, or regular admission deadlines.

Although new to Reston, Levy is enjoying the change of pace from Ann Arbor's college-town atmosphere. "Reston has a different kind of energy—more suburban, but with great amenities," she said. She hopes to connect with local schools and counselors in the future to extend her services to area families.

Her advice to students and parents is to "start early, stay organized, and use the essay as an opportunity to shine," she said. "A compelling essay shows who you are beyond grades and test scores. It reveals character, growth, and perspective."

For more information, visit www.essayhelpforcolleges.com or call 734-395-7745.

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EDUCATION

Dyslexia is a superpower at The Siena School

By Anthony Ozdemir, Guest Writer

When The Siena School opened in Maryland in 2006, its mission was to serve students with learning differences—such as dyslexia and executive functioning challenges—by preparing them for success in college and life.

In 2021, the school opened a second campus in Oakton, serving grades 3–12 and drawing families from Reston and beyond. Its approach emphasizes smaller class sizes, individualized instruction, and a perspective that looks at dyslexia as a strength rather than a limitation.

That perspective is rooted in research as well as experience. The International Dyslexia Association estimates that 15–20% of people show signs of dyslexia, yet many are not identified until adulthood. A 2023 study found that 34% of students in Northern Virginia qualified as having a Specific Learning Disability. For many of those students, difficulty with reading, writing, and spelling can make traditional classrooms an uphill climb.

At Siena, dyslexia is framed differently. “We consider dyslexia a superpower,” said Jennifer Betts, Head of School at Siena’s Northern Virginia campus. “There

is a lot of great evidence that dyslexia links to creative thinking and problem solving. It’s not a limitation; it’s a way of seeing the world that can become a strength when it’s understood and supported.”

Families echo that view. Reston parent Alicia Figueredo described the impact the school has had on her daughter: “It’s not just a school—it’s a place where my daughter is learning to see her dyslexia as a superpower and how to wield it. For us, Siena isn’t a backup plan; it’s the best plan for her to thrive.”

Class sizes at Siena average 10:1 or smaller, compared with the 23:1 reported in Fairfax County Public Schools. Teachers work closely with students and families, which Betts says is key. “We have a school full of teachers who are really excited and passionate about this kind of teaching,” she said. “They are experts in their field, and they want to design environments where students can succeed.”

That environment includes college counseling, internships for high schoolers, assistive technology, arts and athletics, and community service. Siena also emphasizes school culture. Its “House Program” groups students into four houses to encourage teamwork, mentorship, and healthy competition—a nod, students like to joke, to Harry Potter’s Hogwarts.



Siena School is a nearby option for Reston students with learning differences, especially dyslexia. Photo contributed by Siena School

Each October, Siena marks Dyslexia Awareness Month with its annual Siena Celebration. This year’s event, on Thursday, Oct. 16, will be the 20th. The evening recognizes contributions to both Siena and the broader field of dyslexia education. Past honorees of the school’s Cypress Leadership Award have included Olympic sprinter Noah Lyles and bestselling author Rick Riordan.

For students and families who often feel that traditional classrooms don’t quite fit, Siena offers a different model, one where learning differences are seen as part of a wider range of human strengths.

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Langston Hughes Middle School hosts AVID Family Night

By Kristina Burke
AVID Coordinator/
Elective Teacher

Langston Hughes Middle School held its first AVID [Advancement Via Individual Determination] Family Night on Sept. 8. Upon entering, AVID students and their families signed a banner showing their commitment to AVID, just like on College Signing Day.

Next, they checked out the different stations. Two South Lakes AVID students, Natali and Luisana, showed their binder, planner, and notes from last year, and explained how the items were graded in AVID and how helpful they are.

Other stations included games that are a tradition in AVID: Keepy Uppy, where students work together to see how many taps they can do to keep a ball in the air (the current record is 812), and Spoons, in which students learn to take notes about how to play, then use their notes to help them play.



Photos from AVID Family Night contributed by Kristina Burke



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EDUCATION

SLHS Theatre stages 'A Monster Calls'

By Grace Gibbens,
South Lakes Theatre Arts PR Team

South Lakes High School Theatre Arts will bring a powerful and emotional story to the stage with “A Monster Calls,” with performances on Nov. 14, 16, 21 and 22. This is the first production of the play in Northern Virginia.

The play follows Conor, a 13-year-old boy whose mom is battling cancer. As he struggles with bullying, loneliness, and grief, the yew tree near his house turns into a monster that visits him and tells him stories. In

exchange, Conor must tell the story of his worst fear. Along this journey, Conor learns to face his grief and begin to heal.

This play, about love, loss, and moving forward, uses devised theater techniques to collaboratively create the show. Its core ensemble plays a major part in the storytelling, transforming into different characters as extensions of the tree. The production features creative choreography by Sitina Tochterman, Jahlil Greene, and Hudson Koonce. Special effects and projections highlight the minimal but powerful set design.

Highschoolers’ nonprofit STEM2Youth builds STEM literacy

Contributed by South Lakes
STEM2Youth

Built by students for students, STEM2Youth is making waves in STEM education by empowering youth through hands-on, project-based learning. The nationwide 501(c) (3) nonprofit, established by teens Akhil Chada from James Madison High School, and Ateeb Afzal, Max Alfert, Shan Sakhia, and Daniel Echeverri from South Lakes High School, is dedicated to sparking curiosity, encouraging creative problem-solving, and building STEM literacy for the next generation of leaders and innovators.

Since its founding, STEM2Youth has engaged more than 650 children through its programs, with chapters established in seven locations nationwide, including Reston. Learners move through a variety of scientific and engineering concepts, from molecular ideas like DNA exon-intron splicing to fabricating solutions using computer-aided design (CAD). As more schools and libraries adopt the organization’s model of project-based, hands-on learning, STEM2Youth’s footprint continues to expand.

In Virginia, STEM2Youth offers a wide array of activities, from multi-week after-school programs to weekend library workshops. In

Reston specifically, the homebase for STEM2Youth, the nonprofit partners with various elementary schools and libraries, such as Lake Anne Elementary School, to deliver after-school activities to children. During the past year, the team has hosted more than 40 weekend library sessions in Reston and Herndon. “Each experience was made to lower barriers and build confidence for the youth. We wanted to show students that STEM isn’t just for the advanced. It’s for everyone,” Chada explained.

A major milestone for STEM2Youth has been their acknowledgment by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). The VDOE commended their much-needed impact on youth, connected their organization to state leaders in Virginia, and featured them in its newsletter. The endorsement affirms that STEM2Youth programs are aligned with the Standards of Learning (SOL) and positions STEM2Youth for new collaborations that will increase their impact in Virginia and nationwide.

In addition to their programs, STEM2Youth launched a scholarship fund called Fund the Future to support students entering into STEM fields in college. The fund, awarded through a blind essay com-

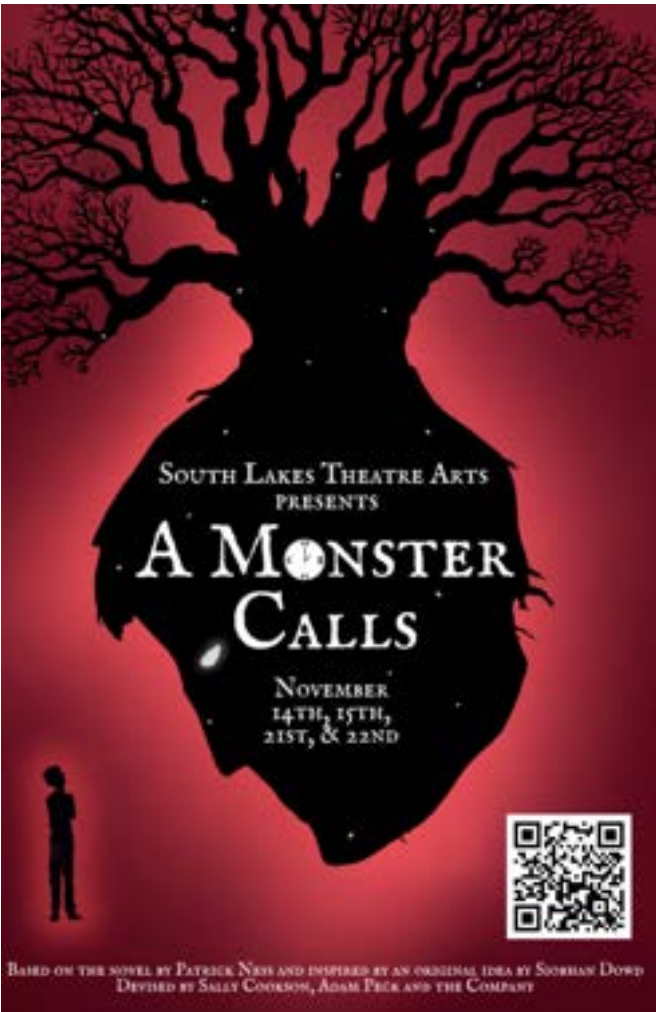


SLHS students involved in STEM2Youth

petition, will grant \$5,000, \$3,000, and \$2,000 prizes to three winners respectively in late October to early November.

This effort directly aligns with their views on STEM barriers. “STEM2Youth was built by students who believe in the power of STEM to change lives,” Afzal said. “Our mission is simple: inspire, empower, and prepare the next generation to lead with creativity and purpose. I think we have a duty to bridge the gap between curiosity and action regardless of financial situation.”

For information, visit <https://stem2youth.org>, email stem2youthva@gmail.com or call 703-203-4000.



More upcoming plays this season:



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.

Joe's puzzles have appeared in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal. This is O'Neill's 27th crossword puzzle creation, made specifically for The Reston Letter readers!

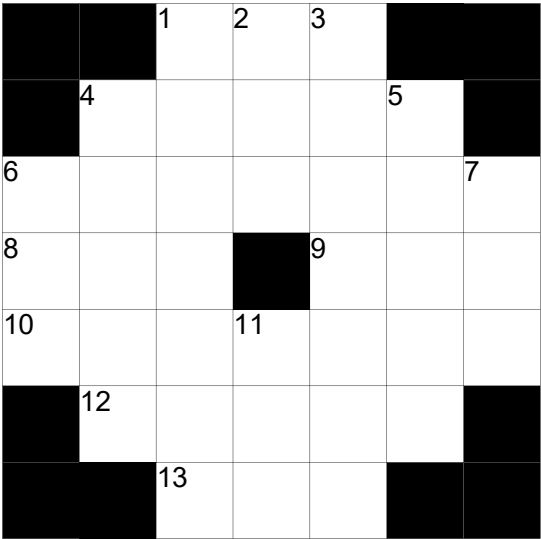
It's Aitches All Over

ACROSS

1. Dinger intro
4. Hogwash or hooley?
6. Talked trash about
8. Flyball's trajectory
9. Feathery neckware
10. Tummy or tolerate?
12. "Downtown Abbey" Emmy winner Maggie
13. Scrooge's "___ humbug!" outburst

DOWN

1. Hair straightener
2. Hawaiian strings, for short
3. "Down and dirty" spa service?
4. Playwright Moss and Lyricist Lorenz
5. Sponge (off of)
6. "Rumor ___ it ..."
7. "Unh-unh"
11. Soccer legend Hamm



SPORTS

Blazing trails under bright football lights

South Lakes girls launch Fairfax County’s first flag football team

By Matt Reider, Staff Writer

On a crisp fall evening in early October, a group of trailblazers were getting their reps in at the South Lakes High School stadium under the big lights. About 30 girls sprinted and cut across the gridiron, each with yellow or light green flags at their sides. Girls’ flag football is a brand-new club sport in Fairfax County, sponsored by the Washington Commanders NFL team. This year, the Commanders have backed teams in Virginia’s Richmond, Henrico, and Fairfax counties, as well as Prince George’s County in Maryland.

In late summer, Spencer Alston was named head coach of the South Lakes team, just a few weeks before the first interest meeting and tryouts. Alston, founder and CEO of Neuroform DMV, a company that helps athletes optimize mental, cognitive, and physical performance, jumped at the opportunity. “It fits perfectly with what I love—helping athletes reach their potential,” he said.

Because girls’ flag football is a winter sport, Alston had to move quickly. The first meeting on Aug. 23 drew strong interest, followed by a Commanders-host-

ed coaches’ clinic on Sept. 27. Tryouts and practices began almost immediately after.

Despite being new, the team quickly found its leaders. Senior Lila Jaster spent three years as a kicker for the boys’ football team and joined as soon as she heard about the program from South Lakes Activities Director Andrew Duggan. She’s joined by senior Emily Brown, who also played tackle football, and junior Isla Eckhardt, who had played girls’ flag football through middle school and kept checking athletic websites until the new team appeared. Senior Grace Gibbens, a soccer player recruited by Lila, is new to the sport, while senior Nyla Heard brings experience from both youth flag football in Vienna and elite rugby.

Duggan is thrilled to see the new program take shape. He hopes girls’ flag football will attract students who haven’t participated in traditional sports, expanding opportunities for more South Lakes athletes. “It’s exciting to watch something new take root,” he said.

Girls’ flag football’s momentum extends far beyond Reston. The sport has grown rapidly from Florida and Texas into schools nationwide. According to



South Lakes’ flag football team includes (L to R) Lila Jaster, Emily Brown, Isla Eckhardt, Grace Gibbens, Nyla Heard. Photo by Matt Reider

the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), more than half a million girls participated across the country in 2023. By 2026, over 35 club teams will compete in NCAA Division I women’s flag football, and the sport is set to make its Olympic debut at the 2028 Summer Games in Los Angeles.

For the Seahawks who began practice

in late September, the season is about more than competition; it’s about camaraderie, confidence, and paving the way for others. They’re building a new tradition at South Lakes, one sprint, pass, and touchdown at a time, and they hope the community will come out and cheer them on.

Herndon defends coveted Baron Cameron Bowl

By McAllister Pearce-Biney, Student Writer

Herndon High School’s varsity football team started off the season slowly, with four straight losses. In their fifth game, they met their cross-town rivals in the annual Baron Cameron Bowl. The South Lakes Seahawks went in with a 3-1 record, ready to take the trophy back to South Lakes. The teams squared off at Herndon’s field on Oct. 4 in an afternoon game.

In a slow first quarter, Herndon’s defense forced two turnovers, giving them more opportunities on offense. Quarterback Hayden Rita completed a 45-yard pass to Ethan Braxton, giving the Hornets momentum into the second quarter.

The second half was intense. It opened with a field goal by Ryan Quick, who added another in the third



Hornets celebrate their first win with Coach Richards. Photo by Erin Grogan

quarter. Both teams got into a scuffle and drew penalties, but Herndon’s defense kept its composure, forcing South Lakes into mistakes. Late in the third, Rita completed a 60-yard touchdown pass to Braxton, pushing

the Hornets ahead 13-6.

As the fourth quarter began, South Lakes clawed back, tying the game 13-13 after a rushing touchdown. But Herndon’s Timothy Fouche broke loose for a 62-yard touchdown, followed by a two-point conversion by David Castillo, giving the Hornets a 20-13 lead.

With just over a minute left, South Lakes answered with a 50-yard touchdown pass, tying the game at 20-20 after the extra point. The stadium erupted as both crowds roared. But moments later, Rita threw an interception, stunning Herndon and firing up South Lakes fans.

Herndon’s defense wasn’t done. Daniel McCollum pressured the quarterback into scrambling on third down, setting up a crucial interception by Xavier Carter that gave the Hornets one final chance.

With six seconds left, kicker Ryan Quick lined up for a 50-yard field goal. The crowd held its breath as the ball sailed through the uprights. Herndon erupted in celebration, defending the bowl in dramatic fashion.



Photo by Will Bonham Photography

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SPORTS

SHLS Boys and Girls volleyball teams join forces for 'Dig Pink' event

South Lakes High School's Girls Volleyball team and their opponents from Falls Church warm up as part of their "Dig Pink" event. On Oct. 3, South Lakes hosted the event in support of the Side-Out Foundation, a breast cancer research and awareness charity. This was the first time that the newly-formed South Lakes Boys Volleyball team was able to participate. The double-headers against Falls Church resulted in wins for both South Lakes teams, with the boys winning the first match 3 sets to 1, and the girls winning 3-0.



'Dig Pink' supported the Side-Out Foundation for breast cancer research and awareness. Photo by Matt Reider

New head football coach arrives at Herndon

By McAllister Pearce-Biney,
Student Writer

Coach Josh Richards arrived as the new head coach for Herndon varsity football for the 2025-'26 season. He is a familiar face in the program, as he has been the defensive coordinator.

Richards credits his father as a big part of the reason that he's a mastermind at coaching. He introduced him to the game of football, which led Richards to

compete as an athlete.

Richards describes his coaching style as adaptable to each player's character and growth; he considers himself a player-centered coach. "I want the players who come through my program to grow into great people in life," he said. He hopes that they become dependable men, future fathers, and individuals who can face life's adversities and come out on top.

"Our focus is simply on getting better

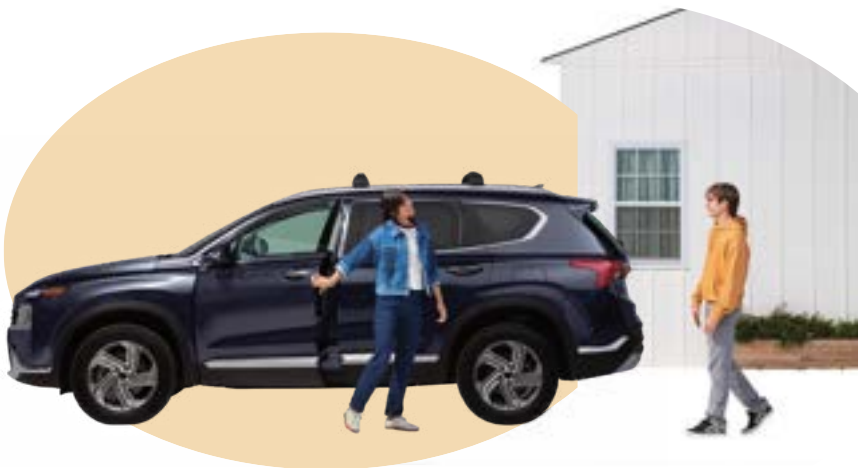
each day. That mindset keeps us motivated, and once everything starts to click, I believe we'll become a dominant team," he added.

Culture is everything in the Herndon sports community, and Richards relies heavily on it. "Accountability, preparation, and effort are the core standards that drive the football program," he said. The program is built on getting better every single day and being the best version of themselves. Success for the Hornets is

showing up every day with the mindset to get better. It's proven that when they consistently live out those standards, their actions create buy-in. That buy-in is what allows the football team to keep building and getting better until it shows on the scoreboard.

Football is a mentally and physically challenging sport, but having these reminders and goals in mind is a great way to work harder and reach Coach Richards' ultimate goal: getting on top.

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Ask the Expert: Halloween face painting with Lana Vittor

This month, we’re excited to feature Lana Vittor, a talented face painter who brings color and creativity to kids’ events all around our community. Lana’s expertise comes from her work with Vienna Singing Princesses, where she turns little kids into everything from sparkling butterflies to fierce tigers.

With Halloween right around the corner, Lana is here to share tips and ideas for transforming simple costumes into magical characters with just a few strokes of a paintbrush. Whether you’re going for spooky, silly, or spectacular, her advice will help make this year’s trick-or-treating even more unforgettable.

1. What's the best kind of facepaint to use?

I like to use the palettes from Snazaroo because their paint is very fluid, making it easy to work with, as well as easy to wash off with water or a makeup wipe.

2. What kind of brushes or sponges are best?

The brand for paint brushes doesn't really matter, but you want to look at the shape of each brush to get clean facepaint



Lana Vittor is our face painting expert. Photo contributed by Lana Vittor

every time. I like to use fine, pointed brushes that aren't too small but can do detail work. For sponges, I like to use very soft sponges so that your skin doesn't get irritated.

3. What's the trick to keeping face paint from smudging or fading?

To help prevent smudging and fading, you want to use really pigmented paints and make sure that you use very smooth lines instead of having the paint clump up. However, kids are bound to touch their faces which might make it harder to prevent the smudging.

Lana made a video to show you how to paint faces to look like a skeleton. Check it out... Thank you, Lana!



Calm Corner: How to handle fear and feel brave

By Victoria Stacy,
Kids Section Co-Editor

Sometimes fear shows up when we least expect it—a spooky movie, a loud sound, or even an imaginary “what if” thought. Being scared is normal, but you can teach your brain and body to calm down. Here are four helpful strategies you can try anytime.

Steady Hold

When you feel nervous, hold something solid like a smooth rock, a soft blanket, or a warm mug of tea or cocoa. Notice how it feels in your hands—heavy or light, rough or smooth. Holding something steady can remind your brain and body that you are steady too.

Box Breathing

This is a simple way to slow your breathing and feel calmer. Breathe in while you count to four. Hold your breath for four. Slowly breathe out for four. Hold again for four before starting over. Repeat a few times until you feel more in control.

Curious Look

Fear often feels smaller when we get curious. If something scares you, ask yourself, “What’s interesting about this?” Notice colors, shapes, or details. Curiosity helps your brain switch from “danger” mode to “discovery” mode.

Make It Silly

Give your scary thought or object a silly voice or goofy dance. Imagine it wearing funny clothes. Laughing about it takes away some of its power.

These strategies work anywhere—at home, at school, or even at night—and can help you face fear with confidence.



Editor's Picks
Books for All Ages

Cider Mill Coven, by Erin Soderberg Downing

Friends discover that their town's cider mill is run by witches. Together they solve a mystery and learn about friendship and courage in this cozy, slightly spooky, fall read. (9-12 years old)

Just Add Magic, by Cindy Callaghan

Friends find a magical cookbook that causes chaos and teaches about friendship, with every recipe. A fun, magical adventure full of mystery and surprises. (9-12 years old)

Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark, by Alvin Schwartz

A classic collection of creepy and funny folktales perfect for reading aloud. Some stories are silly, some are spooky, all are sure to spark imaginations. (9-12 years old)

The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything, by Linda Williams

A brave old lady isn't scared, even when she's followed through the forest. A rhythmic read-aloud about facing your fears. (Avail. in English & Spanish.) (5-8 years old)

Click, Clack, Boo!: A Tricky Treat, by Doreen Cronin

It's Halloween on the farm! Duck is ready for tricks and treats, but Farmer Brown isn't so sure. A not-too-spooky story with laughs, surprises, and familiar farm friends. (5-8 years old)

A spooky Halloween night in Reston

By Erin Gibbens, Kids Section Co-Editor

Blanks

First in the blanks, then put your answers into the story as you read it.

adjective _____	color _____
costume _____	silly object _____
Halloween object _____	verb _____
name _____	spooky word _____
costume _____	scary sound _____
number _____	adjective _____
candy, plural _____	animal _____
adjective _____	plural object _____
snack _____	body part _____
animal _____	place _____
verb, past tense _____	adjective _____
number _____	

On Halloween night, I dressed up as a [adjective] [costume] and grabbed my [Halloween object] before heading out to trick-or-treat with my friend, [name], who was dressed up as a [costume].

The first house gave me [number] pieces of [candy, plural], and the second house gave my friend a [adjective] [snack] that looked like a [animal].

My friend and I laughed so hard we nearly [verb, past tense] in the street!

We finished trick-or-treating in our neighborhood just in time to hurry over to Lake Anne Plaza, where the fun was just beginning. We were surprised to see that there were [number] people there. And the big fountain in Lake Anne was glowing [color] and spraying water in the shape of a [silly object]. Just then, the statue of Bob Simon suddenly seemed to [verb] and whisper, “[spooky word]!”

We hadn't even started trick-or-treating around Lake Anne yet when we heard [scary sound] echoing across the lake. Everyone watched. Out of the water rose a [adjective] [animal] carrying a bag of [plural object]. We yelled, “Ahhhh!” and ran until our [body part] hurt from laughing. It was time to go to [place].

As we walked home, we agreed that Halloween in Reston is the most [adjective] adventure we could ever have.

KIDS

Candy and costumes galore—also known as Halloween!

By Alexis Estep, Restonian, Chef, Mom

Have you been enjoying all the leaves changing colors and the somewhat cooler temperatures? What I have been enjoying most is the way fall makes me want to slow down and be present. Then I quickly realize that I need to get costumes for four kids and get candy to pass out on Halloween! This year, I have three ninjas (all different colors, of course: gold, purple, and blue) and a basketball trading card that comes to life. I am very excited about this one, as a dear friend is helping me pull it off. Now let’s not forget about the most important part...candy! What is your favorite? I am partial to Reese’s Pieces and Rolos. My kids love it all, but Reese’s Peanut Butter cups are a universal favorite. Well, believe it or not, you can make your own version at home! I will share a version of the beloved Reese’s peanut butter pumpkins. I hope you enjoy them and have a spooky, fun Halloween!

Reese’s Pumpkins adapted from Kayla’s Kitch and Fix (<https://kaylaskitchandfix.com/>)

- Ingredients:**
- 1 cup creamy peanut butter
 - 1/4 cup pure maple syrup
 - 1/2 cup powdered sugar
 - 1 tsp pumpkin pie spice
 - 1 cup chocolate chips
 - 1 tbsp coconut oil
 - Flaky Sea salt
- Directions:**
1. **Mix it up!**
In a bowl, stir together peanut butter, maple syrup, powdered sugar, and pumpkin pie spice until it looks smooth and all the same.
 2. **Make a dough ball.**
Use your hands or a spoon to gather the mixture into one big ball.
 3. **Get the dough ready.**
Put down a piece of parchment paper. Place the dough ball on it,

- then cover it with another piece of parchment.
4. **Flatten the dough.**
Push down on the dough with your hands to make it flat. You can also use a rolling pin. Don’t make it too thin—keep it a little thick so it tastes like Reese’s candy.
 5. **Cut out shapes.**
Use a cookie cutter (or ask an adult to help with a butter knife) to cut fun shapes. Put the shapes on a baking sheet covered with parchment paper.
 6. **Freeze the shapes.**
Place the baking sheet in the freezer for 10 minutes. If the shapes still feel soft, leave them in a little longer.
 7. **Melt the chocolate.**
When the shapes have about 5

- minutes left, put chocolate and coconut oil in a bowl. Microwave it for 30 seconds at a time, stirring in between, until the chocolate is smooth and melted. (Ask an adult for help with the microwave.)
8. **Dip in chocolate.**
Take out the shapes and dip each one into the chocolate. Flip them around so they get fully coated.
 9. **Let them dry.**
Put the chocolate-covered shapes on a cooling rack with parchment underneath. Sprinkle with sea salt if you want. You can put them in the fridge or freezer to cool faster.
 10. **Enjoy!**
Once they’re firm, gently press the bottoms to remove them from the rack. Keep them cold until you’re



Estep family cooking Reese's Pumpkins
ready to eat—and enjoy your
homemade candy!



The history of Halloween

By Delaney Stacy, Student Contributor, SLHS ‘28

Every fall, kids and adults in the United States get excited about Halloween. About 70 to 75% of Americans pick out costumes to wear on Oct. 31. And it’s not just the U.S.—about 40 other countries celebrate, too! With so many people joining in, you might wonder: where did Halloween come from?

Ancient Beginnings

About 2,000 years ago, people called the Celts held a festival named Samhain (pronounced “sow-in”). For them, Oct. 31 was like New Year’s Eve, the end of summer, and the beginning of winter. They believed that on this night, the world of the living and the world of spirits came closer together. To protect themselves, people lit big bonfires and wore costumes.

Other Traditions Mix In

Later, when the Roman Empire was in charge, they added their own celebrations, like Feralia, a day to honor the dead. Over time, other fall traditions were mixed in. In medieval England, people practiced “souling,” going door to door asking for food in

exchange for prayers. In Ireland and Scotland, kids would go “guising,” dressing up in costumes and performing tricks or songs to get treats.

Coming to America

In the 1800s, many Irish immigrants came to the U.S., bringing their Halloween customs with them. At first, it wasn’t just about candy; it included parties, games, and community gatherings. By the early 1900s, towns worked to make Halloween more about fun for kids and less about spooky mischief.

Halloween Today

By the mid-1900s, Halloween had become one of the biggest holidays in America, with candy companies, costume makers, and decorations helping it grow. Today, Halloween is about dressing up, trick-or-treating, and celebrating with friends and family. So even though Halloween is now mostly about fun and candy, it also has a long history. It began as a way to mark the seasons, honor the dead, and bring communities together.

Do you celebrate Halloween? If so, what’s your favorite tradition?



OPINIONS

We want to hear from our readers! What local topics do you care about? Please pitch your opinion articles or article ideas to ezreston@gmail.com

GREENFARE

It's not what you eat—it's what you don't eat!

Removing animal products and oils will have a massive impact on the three deadliest causes of death in the U.S.: heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. The National Academy of Sciences prescribes minimizing trans fatty acids—so bad for us, they are among the few ingredients the FDA banned in processed foods (removing the Generally Regarded As Safe or GRAS designation in 2015) because they increase death from all causes. Today, our biggest intake of trans fatty acids comes not from processed foods, but from animal products.

Removing all oils (yes, even olive oil) eliminates Omega 6, the inflammatory essential fatty acids that cause joint pain and result in chronic illnesses. An experiment to remove all oil for a week usually will remove rheumatoid arthritis, arthritis, and other joint pain. Restaurants and processed foods add salt and oil to extend the shelf life at the expense of your health. The addition of sugar and salt make food hyper-palatable, which is sweeter and saltier than food found in nature. A sprinkle of salt on a dish increases the average calorie intake by 10%, leading to weight gain.

The elimination of animal products and oils are the biggest dietary improvement you can make. When

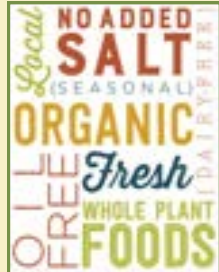
people go to a Whole 30 diet, they quickly drop weight because they are eliminating all the salt, oil, and sugar along with whatever the food industry wants to throw in to create food addictions and extend shelf life. The one positive thing about the new weight loss drugs is that they remove any doubt that you can be obese and healthy; with weight loss, comes the reduction of death by all causes. But, if you stop taking the drugs, you regain lost weight. To maintain weight, and get off the drugs, a high-fiber diet is essential, along with the nutrients found in a whole plant lifestyle. The better way is to skip the drugs and try a 21 Day program (like we offer at GreenFare Organic Café) to feel better, look better, and normalize to a healthy weight.

Have you seen Whole Foods Market's new bags? They list more than 300 ingredients they do not allow in food products they sell. We have become guinea pigs for the chemical industry with all kinds of untested things routinely making their way into our food that cause inflammation leading to chronic disease.

Label reading is one of my best ways to avoid buying things that I know I shouldn't. Occasionally, I'll pick

up a childhood favorite and as soon as I see dyes and palm oil, back on the shelf it goes. At GreenFare, you avoid hundreds of these ingredients as well as dairy, casein, eggs, animal protein, and added salt, oil, and sugar. Beans, grains, vegetables, and fruit provide all the elements needed for optimal health. You are what you eat!

This article is written by Gwyn Whittaker, owner of GreenFare Organic Cafe



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Ask Doctor S.

Sorry does not have to be the hardest word

A rupture, a break in a connection between two people, often occurs in relationships when someone is angry or hurt. Ruptures are part of every relationship. When someone tells us that we have hurt them, we do not get to tell them otherwise. But learning to take ownership of an abrasive or reactive tone of voice or hurtful words or deeds, instead of getting defensive, gaslighting or otherwise denying our contribution, is a life skill that allows us to repair a rupture. As children, repeated ruptures without repair by our primary caregivers are traumatic, as they interfere with our ability to form secure attachments which can play out for the rest of our lives in a myriad of ways. In all relationships, friendships, partnerships (personal and professional), parent-child and romantic relationships, repairing a rupture helps re-establish trust and requires more than a verbal acknowledgement of wrongdoing. A July 2024 article in Psychology Today outlines several components of a meaningful apology: admitting fault and taking responsibility, expressing genuine regret, and offering to make amends. People often seek therapy when there are ruptures without repairs in their closest relationships. Why is it so hard for so many people to apologize and mean it?

Apologizing requires vulnerability, and many of us

grew up in families in which admitting fault is a sign of weakness (i.e., a loss of power and control). In these situations, pride is mistaken for strength. Accepting responsibility also triggers shame and guilt, and when someone already feels not “good enough,” avoiding apologies protects them from further harsh self-judgment. For anyone who grew up in a home in which there was abuse, apologizing feels psychologically unsafe; thus, admitting responsibility may be associated with punishment, rejection or anger. Some are actually unaware of the impact of our words and actions on others. Those who lack emotional awareness tend to minimize or deny their role, because they do not understand why another person is hurt.

One of the best gifts we can give to ourselves and others in our lives is to heal ourselves so that we can own our mistakes and express ourselves honestly, even if we grew up in a family in which apologizing was not modeled or missteps were punished harshly. For those of us who are parents, showing and teaching our children that vulnerability allows connection (and please do not demand an apology from your child because that is not an actual

meaningful apology) and helps them learn that making mistakes is simply part of being human.

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

Dr. Hayley B. Sherwood is a longtime Clinical Psychologist in Reston/Herndon. To learn more, please visit her website at www.oakhillpsychological.com. Please visit the About Us section on our website to learn more about our team of therapists!



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Thank you for Halstead Glen parking coverage

By Lisa Mackin, Halstead Glen Resident

Thank you for the Reston Letter's coverage of the street parking challenges facing Halstead Glen residents. Gene Powell's front-page story, along with Angie O'Grady's thought piece, brought much-needed attention to our situation and ultimately helped us achieve a positive resolution.

I am pleased to share that Supervisor Alcorn has approved funding from his District Capital Funds budget to restore some parking spaces adjacent to our neighborhood on Center Harbor Road. The new striping design will be submitted to VDOT for review in the coming weeks. We were told this project could restore eight or more street parking spots for our neighborhood—the exact num-

ber of parking spots has yet to be confirmed.

If things go as planned, roadwork could potentially begin in spring or summer 2026. This delay is due to the multi-step process of striping redesign, VDOT approval, and contractor scheduling. Supervisor Alcorn has also requested that street parking enforcement be paused during this period, which provides some relief to our residents, but we remain cautious as the delayed enforcement cannot be fully guaranteed.

Your newspaper's commitment to covering local issues that matter to residents helped bring this problem to light—and set us on the path to restoring street parking on Center Harbor Road. Thank you for your excellent journalism and for highlighting our community's concerns.

Restonian

We'll leave the (burnt orange) light on for you

The last year has seen one big change in Reston—not one, but two fancy new hotels have opened their doors with amenities that would have been unthinkable when our plastic fantastic planned community was founded. Rooftop bars with views of bland glass boxes rivaling those in, say, downtown Dallas! Multiple dining "concepts," for those who find "food" too commonplace! Rare bourbons, not the stuff in plastic bottles once made right here in Reston for folks at a certain state school!

Now, we're simple folk who usually stay at lesser hotelbrands, ones where you can park right outside your front door and walk down a "breezeway" to get ice from a machine that sounds like a broken rock tumbler. But we do think these hotels would benefit from a little more... Reston.

Instead of rooftop bars, why not a sunken conversation pit? Nothing sparks lively conversation and good times like stepping down into a living space muted by thick wall-to-wall carpeting.

Instead of pricey wooden and textile finishes to signal contemporary good taste, why not poured concrete? If it was good enough for generations of Reston kids to play on, it's good enough for a C-level executive flying into town for an in-person "standup," whatever that is.

Gyms with ellipticals and weight racks are great, but to get your guests' heart rate really pumping, why not provide bikes and point them to the W&OD? They'll be in tip-top shape, assuming they don't get run off the trail.

Instead of valet parking, why not offer baffling color-coded garages, inscrutable rules about when you can park for free, and an app to provide the true Reston experience?

Everyone loves room service, but we love chain dining even more!

And, of course, what busy business person doesn't love golfing when they're not busy doing business? Might want to hurry up and get those guest passes while they're still available, the end.

LIFESTYLE

Why fall is the time for protecting your home

A roof, gutter, and siding check now can save you major repairs later

Contributed by Michaelson Roofing Improvements

When you live in a place like Reston, you get to enjoy four full seasons—but that also means your home weathers four seasons of wear and tear. And while winter prep often steals the spotlight, the real magic lies in what you do *right after* the leaves drop.

Think of it as a check-up. You wouldn't skip your annual physical, so why skip one for your home's exterior?

Your roof might be hiding more than you think

From the street, your roof might look fine—but that doesn't mean it's healthy. Throughout the year, especially during spring pollen and fall leaf season, debris can settle into valleys, behind dormers, or around vent stacks—places you simply can't see from the ground. If left undisturbed, this debris holds moisture against your shingles and accelerates deterioration. That's how small problems become major leaks.

Ask yourself:

- Do I know what's sitting on my roof right now?
- Have I had it inspected since the last big storm?
- Is anyone monitoring potential wear near chimneys, flashing, or skylights?

You don't need snow to ruin a roof—sometimes all it takes is a slow drip from rotting leaves.

Gutters: the silent protectors

In Reston's tree-lined neighborhoods, gutters often fill up fast. Oak, maple, and pine needles are beautiful in the

fall—but brutal on your downspouts. And even if you cleaned them last spring, things can change in just a few weeks. Overflowing or blocked gutters lead to:

- Water spilling over and soaking siding or foundation
- Ice buildup during cold snaps
- Sagging sections that detach when heavy with water or debris

Even clean gutters can struggle in a hard rain if they're not properly sloped or sized. And if you've ever noticed water spilling over the edge during a storm, it might not be a clog—it might be the system itself.

A healthy supplement: gutter guards

Gutter guards can be a smart addition to your home's drainage system, but not all guards are created equal. Gutter helmets do a great job at keeping debris out, but they also block a significant amount of water during heavy storms. Similarly, fine mesh screens can cause water to sheet over the edge instead of draining properly. For most homes, guards with larger openings strike a balance—they block leaves while still letting water flow in.

No single product is perfect for every roofline, so it's worth exploring the option that fits your home's shape, tree coverage, and pitch.

Siding damage isn't always obvious

Siding gets blasted by pollen, sun, wind, and rain all year long. It's easy to ignore until you're dealing with high energy bills or interior leaks.

Look for signs like:

- Warped or bulging panels
- Gaps around windows and doors
- Greenish stains from algae or mildew

Even hairline cracks can invite moisture—and once water gets behind siding, it's only a matter of time before it becomes a much bigger issue.

Why timing matters in NoVa

Northern Virginia winters are unpredictable. Some years bring heavy snow and ice. Others? Just a few frosts and some chilly rain. But that inconsistency is exactly why a yearly inspection matters. If you wait for obvious damage, you might be too late. But if you check in each fall:

- You create a reliable baseline for future insurance claims
- You catch problems while they're still affordable
- You extend the life of your roofing, gutters, and siding

Best of all, you head into winter with peace of mind.

When in doubt, ask a pro

You don't need to get on a ladder or squint at shingles from your driveway. There are local experts who can document your roof, gutters, and siding safely—often with drones and photos you can keep for your records. You've invested in your home. Let fall be the time you protect that investment—before winter weather, wild winds, or leaf piles have a chance to push your exterior past its limit.

Reston real estate: an autumn report

Roxanne Watts, Watts Fine Homes

Pumpkins are brightening Reston's doorways, leaves are falling, and Monarch butterflies are on their way back to Mexico as the local market enters its final quarter of 2025. Much like these signs of autumn, the market reflects abundance, transition, and a shift into winter's quieter season.

Signaling abundance, the number of sales in Q3 was up 3% to 275 despite higher rates and prices edging higher. In the past five years, Reston homeowners enjoyed a 50% increase in value, an unsustainable pace over the long term. Appreciation has now adjusted to 5% over the past year. Average days on market is 25, nearly double last year's pace, giving some buyers more breathing room. Rates bumped down in late September, which may set up another solid quarter at year's end.

There is much talk in the national news about increased inventory, and Reston saw a surge earlier this year, but Q3 brought stabilization. A total of 317 properties were listed in the last quarter, compared to 320 last year, still below pre-pandemic levels (420 in Q3 2019).

Reston's diversity of home styles is part of its appeal. Sales ranged from \$142,000 for a 426-square-foot studio on Sagewood Lane, a retirement complex, to \$2,550,000 for a 5,100-square-foot lakefront home. In the luxury condo market, 1830 Fountain Drive #1305, a 2,700-square-foot unit at the Paramount, sold for

\$1,950,000 in eight days. Mid-range properties continue to draw the most attention. A townhouse at 1526 Poplar Grove, 1,800 square feet, listed at \$599,000, escalated to \$625,000, showing the value of five-star condition. The 2,400-square-foot townhome at 11804 Great Owl Circle, purchased for \$690,000 in 2022, was beautifully updated and resold for \$770,000 last month. In the single-family market, most homes are in the \$900,000 to \$1,500,000 range.

In July, we noted sellers aiming for higher prices and buyers negotiating harder due to higher rates and inventory. Now, more listings are being canceled as some sellers did not get the price they hoped for—not just in Reston, but throughout the Mid-Atlantic, where 13 of every 100 homes are withdrawn. In Reston, 49 homeowners pulled their listings in Q3. Inevitably, the market determines value, as buyers compare homes on price, features, and benefits. Value is a snapshot in time and can change quickly. Last year, homes sold at 100.4% of asking price; now they average 99.4%, a slight softening. Sellers who prepare their homes thoughtfully and price them properly still attract attention and multiple offers. Here are some tips to make your home show better in fall and winter:

Light it up. With shorter days, natural light is limited, so keep blinds open and use lamps and warm-tone bulbs for a cozy glow.

Highlight warmth. Showcase the fireplace, or add soft

throws and pillows in seasonal colors.

Keep it cozy. Set the thermostat comfortably so buyers want to linger. Avoid heavy scents; opt for cinnamon sticks or cider simmering in a crockpot.

Curb appeal still counts. Rake leaves, clear walkways, add mums, and a simple wreath on the door.

Highlight outdoor spaces. Decks and patios feel more appealing with lighting or a bistro set to suggest year-round enjoyment.

For buyers, contract terms are shifting. Home inspections, appraisals, financing contingencies, and repair credits are back. Currently, 66% of contracts include inspections, and 74% include financing contingencies. Sellers must focus on condition as well as appearance. Reston's market is shaped by economic forces, with many households tied to federal agencies, contractors, or Dulles Corridor tech firms. Job confidence translates into housing confidence. For some families this means delaying a move; for others, it opens opportunity with less competition.

Looking ahead to Q4, the market is coming into balance, offering opportunities for both motivated buyers and realistic sellers. Stay tuned for the next quarterly update to see how the story unfolds.

Roxanne Watts, Coldwell Banker Realty. Living and working in the Reston market for 37 years. Top 2% Worldwide, Washingtonian's Best. 703-618-1799, roxannebwatts@gmail.com



Take a less-traveled day trip

By Joe Steiner, Appalachian Trail 2000-miler

To see some fall classic autumn colors in the mountains, and avoid the traffic on Shenandoah's Skyline Drive, try Signal Knob on Massanutten Mountain in George Washington National Forest. Just over an hour's drive from Reston, the Signal Knob trailhead (38.935-78.320) is your entry to this 10-mile loop on the Massanutten, Meneka Peak, and Tuscarora Trails. The climb is 1,500 feet, and the trail can be rocky, so lace your shoes securely and bring your poles. There are plenty of campsites if you want to do an overnight trip (no permits

or reservations required!), and I've marked some nice ones on the map.

Going counterclockwise up the Massanutten Trail (orange blazes) gets the rockiest parts done first. Enjoy the view from Signal Knob, and retrace your steps for about a mile back to the Meneka Peak trail. If you have the time and ambition, take the Meneka Peak trail (white blazes) to the Tuscarora (blue blazes), then watch for signs to Signal Knob parking on the Massanutten trail. Otherwise, head back to your car on the Massanutten Trail. Read more blogs by Joe on Good Wolf Gear's website: www.goodwolfgear.com



Signal Knob is a 10-mile loop trail less traveled and a little closer than Shenandoah's Skyline Drive hikes. Photo by Joe Steiner

LIFESTYLE

Inside Art

By Louise Seirmarco-Yale,
Reston Artist



Oh good! Halloween is almost here! The holiday invites us to turn even the most ordinary home into a stage set. Front yards become haunted forests, porches glow like pumpkin-lit galleries, and the whole scene feels enchanting. It's the first holiday of the season that transforms life into art, setting the tone for the decorative magic that will carry us through November and December.

Unlike professional art, Halloween thrives on lopsided jack-o'-lanterns, silly costumes, and over-the-top cobwebs. Adults rediscover how much fun art can be—expressive rather than polished, just like when we finger-painted as children. Preparing for Halloween, we give ourselves freedom from perfection. Fog machines, flickering candles, and eerie soundtracks let us experience our environment as fantastical. This mirrors the way children see wonder everywhere. Shadows become shapes, and sounds spark stories. Halloween restores our sense of magic through artful staging. Adults can reclaim the childhood magic of "let's pretend" when they stage their homes as haunted mansions, enchanted forests, or playful spook-fests. Decorations like gravestones, skeletons, or cobwebs tell tiny stories. It is so out of the ordinary that it's just plain fun. Art is like that.

From stringing orange lights to staging spooky yard displays, we can all turn the everyday into the extraordinary. For adults, this mirrors childhood fort-building or decorating a treehouse. It is the delight of pure visual play with no utilitarian purpose. That is like art, too, and it's good for us.

One of the greatest rewards of the holiday is that Halloween does not hand out just candy; it hands back childlike wonder. It taps into something primal—the urge to create, to dress up, to see the world transformed into theater.

It also offers the reward of working with our hands to carve a pumpkin, craft a mask, or cobble together a homemade costume. It reawakens the simple tactile love of making art—cutting, gluing, painting, shaping—actions we often abandon after childhood.

Children love to pretend to be superheroes, monsters, or royalty. Halloween lets adults reclaim that playful invention by allowing us to try on identities that stir creativity and imagination in ways daily life rarely allows. Dressing up for the fun of it just feels good.

Family pumpkin-carving nights or group costume-planning sessions echo the childhood thrill of making art together. We remember how communal creativity bonds people rather than isolating them in private endeavors.

In essence, Halloween is our annual reminder that the inner child never disappears. It only waits for moments when art, play, and imagination are given free rein. So this month, give yourself permission to play. Join the Halloween fun, and let the art spirit inside you come back to life.

Louise Seirmarco-Yale is a Reston Speaker, Teacher and the Author of "Art. You Be The Judge. Reawaken your Instincts and Enjoy Art On Your Own Terms", available on Amazon. Download for free at www.people-needart.com. Email her at: hello@peopleneedart.com FB and Instagram @louise_seirmarco_art

Reston's own ignite the stage: local band debuts with breakout single

Contributed by Out of Order

What began in the halls of South Lakes High School has officially hit the airwaves. Out of Order—the four-piece rock band formed in 2021 by Reston natives Daniel Ogun, Colin Surabian, and Ezra Beck Baker, along with longtime friend Jason Hill of Ashburn—has just released its debut single, "Loretta." Within a week, the track has already been streamed thousands of times.

The band members, all 19-year-old college students, channel the raw energy of their musical heroes—Led Zeppelin, Greta Van Fleet, and Red Hot Chili Peppers—blending classic rock riffs with a bold, modern edge. Their sound is electrified, unapologetic, and deeply rooted in the blues-rock tradition they honed while playing gigs across Reston and Herndon.

Lead guitarist Daniel Ogun, a neuroscience major on the pre-med track at

George Mason University's Honors College, delivers solos marked by both precision and fire—a reflection of his dual life in science and sound. Bassist Colin Surabian, who studies chemical engineering and music at MIT, brings rhythmic complexity and technical finesse to the band's foundation. Drummer Ezra Beck Baker is taking a gap year while studying geospatial intelligence and music at Penn State, his dynamic percussion driving the band's live energy. On vocals, Jason Hill, a student of educational studies with a minor in psychology at Roanoke University, brings soul and storytelling to every track.

"Loretta" captures the spirit of a band that has grown together—from garage rehearsals to packed local shows—and now steps onto a larger stage. It's not just a song; it's a statement, and a reminder that Reston's creative pulse is alive and loud.

With more music on the way and live



The band Out of Order has been together for four years. Photo contributed by OOO

shows in the works, Out of Order is poised to carry the rock tradition into a new era—one riff, one lyric, one crowd at a time.

Meet the authors: Reston Letter Book Club hosts holiday event

By Sarah Hickner, Reston Letter Book Club President

The holidays are a season of gatherings, stories, and gifts. This year, the Reston Letter Book Club is adding something special to the mix—an event sure to delight book lovers. Mark your calendar for Thursday, Nov. 6, when Café de Cleiu, a cozy new coffee shop and cafe in South Reston, hosts our first ever holiday book shop.

The Reston Letter Book Club was founded to connect local authors with local readers. While most clubs focus on specific genres or the latest bestsellers, ours takes a different approach. We shine a spotlight on books written by authors from our own community. Even better, the writers themselves attend, ready to answer your questions. No need to wonder why a character made a certain choice or how a scene came to life—you can ask the author directly.

The holiday book shop and club meeting will be a two-part event. First, the pop-up shop will showcase a variety of local authors. Whether you're shopping for yourself or crossing names off your holiday list, you'll find something for everyone. From children's books to YA fantasy to memoir, the lineup offers a wide range of choices. Authors will also be

on hand to sign copies, making each gift even more personal.

The featured book for our Nov. 6 meeting is "Truth Be Told" by Kathleen Barber. Originally published as "Are You Sleeping," this psychological thriller follows a true-crime podcast that reopens a murder case, unraveling the lives of those left behind. The novel was even adapted into a Netflix series starring Academy Award-winner Octavia Spencer.

The Nov. 6 holiday book shop is the perfect opportunity to purchase meaningful gifts, discover new favorite authors, and connect with fellow readers. It's more than shopping; it's a celebration of stories and the people who write them.

If you or someone you know loves books, please be sure to share this event. Let's bring local readers and writers together. After all, what is a community without its storytellers?

If you are a Reston author and would like to be a part of this event, please contact Sarah at therestonletterbookclub@gmail.com.

SPECIAL HOLIDAY BOOK SHOP & BOOK CLUB MEET-UP

November 6 @ Cafe le Cleiu

- 5:30-6:30: Shop with local authors
- 6:30-8:00: Reston Letter Book Club
- Next Book: Truth be Told by Kathleen Barber

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