

THE RESTON

LETTER

# Reston Museum's annual Lake Anne Cardboard Boat Regatta makes a splash

By Patricia Kovacs,  
Staff Writer

Last Saturday, Lake Anne Plaza buzzed with excitement on a beautiful, sunny afternoon as Reston Museum hosted its annual Lake Anne Cardboard Boat Regatta. The event showcased teams of all ages racing people-powered, life-size cardboard boats across Lake Anne. From noon to 4 p.m., the plaza was filled with laughter, cheers, and the occasional splash as boats competed in a display of creativity and community spirit.

The Cardboard Boat Regatta has become a highlight of the summer calendar, growing in size each year since its inception in 2017. About 30 teams, including local businesses, community organizations, friend groups, and family groups, constructed and decorated boats up to



On Saturday, Aug. 9, Reston Museum hosted around 30 cardboard boat teams to race across an expanse of Lake Anne in search of glory and fun. Photo by Karl Majer

6 feet wide and 12 feet long using only cardboard, duct tape, paint, and imagination. Throngs of Restonians and visitors from all across the Greater Washington, DC

metro area gathered to watch the boats race in timed heats, rowing from the dock to a buoy and back. The event featured live music, local vendors, a perfor-

mance by Reston Community Players, and a Super Soaker station where some of the spectators playfully sprayed the competitors as they raced

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# Reston residents combine for unconventional business venture

By Emma Kingkeo,  
Reston Letter Intern

Michaelson Roofing Improvements (MRI), a company specializing in home exterior restoration and construction, is merging with Gogo's Lemonade—the beloved (and slightly infamous) lemonade stand that opens for just one week each year. The twist? The business owners are a father and son. Both have been featured in The Reston Letter in the past.

“It was really out of the blue,” said David Michaelson, owner of MRI. “He said, ‘Papa, I want to build a lemonade stand.’ And I said, ‘There’s no reason why we can’t.’”

Diego Valle, the seventh-grader behind the stand, has devoted six summers to squeezing lemons in preparation for the annual opening. To his surprise, the nonprofit venture has been a huge success, raising around \$2,000 last year alone for Readers Are Leaders, a local organization that pairs struggling readers with high school athlete mentors.

“When we did it the first year, we never thought we’d keep going,” Michaelson said. “We never thought we’d be blocking this time off in our lives to make lemonade. But once it got beyond that level, we thought, OK, let’s see how far we can take it.”

As part of the merger, the lemonade stand and the roofing company will officially become one entity, though their operations will remain distinct—with a lemonade division and an exterior remodeling division.

At first glance, a union between lemonade and roofing might raise eyebrows, but Michaelson says it’s not as far-fetched as it seems. “With Gogo’s Lemonade



The father-son duo has combined Gogo's Lemonade with Michaelson Roofing Improvements to engage community-building and customer loyalty. Photo by Benjamin Burgess

helping their friends by serving great lemonade, and MRI bringing your home back to good health, we think it’s a pretty aligned mission: to give back to a community that’s been so good to us,” he said.

With MRI now sponsoring the lemonade operation, the business gains an opportunity to engage with potential customers in a new way, while Gogo’s Lemonade benefits from additional support, including fun giveaways like tickets to sports games funded by MRI. Together, the two businesses are creating a new model for local collaboration, one that builds both community and customer loyalty.

At the heart of it all is a shared commitment to giving back. “We had the same goal, so we’re better together,” Michaelson said.

The lemonade stand will continue to donate its profits, and Valle is considering extending the operation beyond its usual August week now that it has more backing—although he’ll have to balance

it with his other commitments, like Taekwondo, which he attends six times a week.

“He’s always going, always looking for time to be a kid,” said Michaelson. “We’ve got to make sure he finds it.”

For others thinking of launching a small business, Michaelson offers this advice: surround yourself with people you trust, people who can take your idea further than you could alone.

“A lot of people say, ‘I can do it all myself.’ And yeah, you can. But maybe then you stay stuck right where you are and don’t have time for anything—or anyone—else,” he said. “It’s OK to let others do what they’re good at. That’s what they’re there for: to support your vision. Go get them.”

Looking ahead, the pair is considering boosting lemonade production with a juicing machine and expanding MRI’s footprint with new office space, showrooms, and additional services like gutter installation.

## bulletin



11<sup>th</sup> district candidate forum gets heated, W&OD trail-cutting update, Sisters Keepers, Dano’s Granola opening, Whole Foods move, new cafe at Lake Anne

## lifestyle



Phantom Foodie’s review of Pisco y Nazca, a new Reston gym is shifting mindsets, 2025 Bioblitz, remodeling tips

## education



Teachers travel to Guatemala, SLHS volleyball wins academic award, Making an Impact column, teacher starts online literacy business, LHMS teacher wins tech award, 11-year-old Eagle Scout

## kids



Back to school trends, Ask an Expert: Ms. Denton at Fox Mill, fish art magic, back to school food ideas

## opinions

Restonian counts what matters, good news about staying strong, and the importance of sleep

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# 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.*

## Dominion Energy, NOVA Parks work on trailside care agreement in W&OD growth removal

By Gene Powell, Staff Writer

The ongoing saga of Dominion Energy's tree and brush clearing along the W&OD Trail now moves to continuing talks with NOVA Parks on some restoration and a potential future trailside care agreement.

In November, the energy company began working on a plan to remove trees and other growth along 30 miles of the 45-mile linear park trail. It said the growth was a potential threat to its power transmission lines. The area involved runs from the trailhead in Arlington County through Fairfax County and Vienna-Reston, to near Leesburg in Loudon County. The multi-use recreational trail continues without the overhead lines to Purcellville.

Work stalled for weeks in the spring when officials in all three counties jointly criticized what was termed "clear-cutting" of a four-mile stretch from near Dunn Loring to Vienna. After some discussions, Dominion resumed work about two months ago.

A Dominion representative said that the project included "removal of 131 trees, including six that were dead" and that "at the request of NOVA Parks and the county, we also removed invasive vegetation." Four additional dead trees in Arlington were to be removed once permit approval was obtained, she said.

The company is committed to replanting four trees in Arlington and "additional plantings" to be determined under a new trailside maintenance agreement "currently in development with NOVA Parks." When it began cutting and clearing in November, the company ended a long-standing agreement with the park authority on such work along the trail.

In an email, Paul Gilbert, executive director of NOVA Parks, said that "Dominion promised to give us feedback" on an extensive draft maintenance proposal from the park authority, following a June meeting. While awaiting the response, Gilbert said NOVA Parks "has been working with our landscape architects to create a plan for the restoration of the four miles that were clear-cut."

## Reston Association throws second annual midsummer Aquapoolooza bash



On July 19 Reston Association hosted its second annual Aquapoolooza— a retro splash-down summer pool party of fun, music, and poolside memories at Lake Newport Pool. In 2024, the pool party was thrown to celebrate RA's 60th Anniversary, but after the party's success it might become a Reston mid-summer tradition.

This year it was a '70s-style summer celebration packed with tie-dye stations, pool games, an 18-foot water slide and plenty of funky prizes. A live DJ played classic tunes, while carnival-style activities and food trucks served up groovy bites.

While overcast weather put a damper on the activities this year, plenty of people still made it out before an early downpour cut the party short. Photos by Reston Association

## Candidates for Virginia's 11th Congressional District square off during public forum in Reston

By Gene Powell, Staff Writer

Candidates for Virginia's 11th Congressional district, which includes Reston, sparred at a July 27 public forum over issues ranging from federal government job cuts to social security solvency to energy needs and public safety.

Democratic nominee James Walkinshaw and Republican Stewart Whitson also took occasional forays into criticizing or defending policies and actions by President Donald J. Trump on immigration, interest rates, education, and the ongoing war in Gaza.

The pair are competing for a vacant seat resulting from the death of U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly in May, from esophageal cancer. Connolly had held the office since 2009. The one-hour forum was sponsored by the Reston Citizens Association.

Early voting for the special election began July 25 and runs through Sept. 6. Ballots may be cast at the North County Government Center in Reston, and at the Fairfax County Government Center. The special election is set for Sept. 9.



Democratic nominee James Walkinshaw (left) and Republican nominee Stewart Whitson (right) are running for the late Gerry Connolly's seat. Photos by Jared Serre

Whitson is a former FBI special agent, served in the U.S. Army, and said he has "spent the last four and a half years on Capitol Hill fighting to advance conservative policies" as senior director for federal policies for the Foundation for Government Accountability.

Walkinshaw currently serves as a two-term member of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, representing the Braddock District. He

noted that prior to the board role, he spent 11 years as Rep. Connolly's chief of staff.

Each candidate set priorities in his opening statement. Walkinshaw criticized what he called "reckless DOGE cuts"—cuts in staffing and expenditures by a special initiative created by President Trump—taking particular aim at the impact on the county's economy and families.

Whitson said he was motivated to run for the office because "families are frustrated ... parents are ignored and sidelined, and money is being stolen by a never-ending wave of taxes." He said those increasing taxes were "pushed by politicians" like Walkinshaw.

Walkinshaw—who criticized the GOP candidate as "Trump's ally" several times—responded by saying the government should be on helping families hard-hit by job loss, "not focused on rounding up law-abiding members of our community," an apparent reference to federal ICE immigration raids nationwide,

Continued on page 3



### Exclusive Back-to-School Promotion for Teachers!

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# THE BULLETIN

## Sisters Keepers builds a global sisterhood to empower Black girls

By Hannah Claggett, Guest Writer

Sisters Keepers was founded in response to the critical lack of mentorship and representation for Black girls aged 12 to 18. Its mission is to create transformative opportunities for young women through leadership development, mentorship, and global connection. With active programs in Reston and Ghana—and plans to expand into Kenya and Nigeria—Sisters Keepers is building a powerful network that centers Black girls' voices and equips them to lead in their communities and beyond.

Each year, Sisters Keepers brings women to Ghana for a year-long residency to mentor and inspire young girls. This commitment was sparked, in part, by founder Violet Pearson's experience

nearly two decades ago in the World Economic Forum's "Young Global Leaders" program, where she was challenged to create the space she believed was missing: a platform rooted in Black girls' leadership, healing, and self-expression.

The organization's impact is both global and local. Sisters Keepers recognizes that the challenges facing at-risk Black girls—such as limited access to education, gender-based violence, and systemic silencing—transcend borders. In Ghana, the organization works to train justice systems to better address cases of sexual assault and domestic violence. In Reston, it supports survivors and at-risk youth with safety, mentorship, and opportunity. Pearson meets these girls where they are, offering not just programming but also lived empathy.

A six-week training institute, culmi-

nating in a leadership summit, recruits girls to engage in community service, leadership development, and mentorship. Sisters Keepers also provides scholarships, school supplies, and essential resources—with 100% of donations going directly to support the girls. Pearson's consulting company contributes 30% of its profits to fund the organization's mission.

One of Sisters Keepers' greatest strengths is its adaptability. Mentors come from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds—including Ivy League institutions—and are trained to support girls across cultures. Many program graduates return as mentors, creating a sustainable cycle of leadership.

At the heart of Pearson's leadership philosophy is "ciocracy"—the belief that everyone can lead. Rather than relying

on rigid hierarchies, Sisters Keepers fosters a collaborative, inclusive environment where mistakes are part of growth and every girl's voice matters.

Whether through local Sister Circles in Reston or international partnerships, Pearson's vision remains clear: to create a world where every Black girl can step fully into her power—seen, supported, and unstoppable.



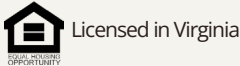
### How's the market?

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

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



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## In Loving Memory *James Francis Devine (1934–2025)*

James Francis Devine, a devoted husband, father, grandfather, and public servant, passed away peacefully on June 9, 2025, in Arlington, Virginia. He was 91 years old.

Born on May 19, 1934, in Westernport, Maryland, to Isabella (née Ord) and Thomas Devine, Jim devoted his life to service—both to his country and to the public good. Over the course of more than five decades in the Federal Government, he made a profound and lasting impact on earth sciences policy and natural hazard research in the United States. His work at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) helped shape critical national initiatives related to nuclear power plant siting, seismic safety standards, radioactive waste disposal, petroleum resources in Alaska, Arctic and Antarctic research, Native American rights, and earthquake research policy.

Admired for his ability to navigate complex, often contentious science policy issues, Jim's counsel was widely sought by USGS Directors, Secretaries of the Interior, and members of Congress. He was a trusted and calming presence during times of crisis, regularly appearing in media interviews where his steady analysis helped maintain public confidence in federal science programs. Internationally, he was a respected representative of the USGS and the Interior Department, known for his wisdom, humor, and pragmatic

insight. In recognition of his exceptional contributions throughout his career, Jim received the Meritorious Service Award, the Distinguished Service Award of the Department of the Interior, and the President's Award for Distinguished Federal Civilian Service, the highest honor the Federal Government can grant to a career civilian employee.

Jim also served with distinction for more than 30 years in the U.S. Army Reserve, retiring as a Colonel in 1988. Many of those years were with the 310th Army Theater Command, where he served as the Assistant Chief of Staff for Security, Plans, and Operations. In this position, he led the Command's overseas deployment planning to provide wartime logistics support for the Army in Germany. His final assignment was as Assistant Chief of Staff for Movements, where he led the successful transition of this staff section to the 4th Movements Control Region. This unit's mission was to provide wartime liaison support between all U.S. forces in the United Kingdom and the British Army for transportation.

Outside of his professional accomplishments, Jim will be remembered as a loving husband, devoted father and grandfather, and a man who'd seen it all and had a story to match. He enjoyed crossword puzzles, traveling, and time with his family. He was known for his quick wit, limerick



writing, unmatched capacity to retain useless trivia, and appreciation for fine single-malt Scotch (non-peaty only!).

Jim is survived by his beloved wife, Katherine Devine; his children Laurie Dunbar (Vic), Michael Devine, and stepdaughter Margaret Goldfaden (Stefan); grandchildren Kate and Henry Goldfaden; and his sister, Margaret Freeman. He was preceded in death by his son, Mark Devine; his parents, Thomas and Isabella Devine; his sister, Isabel Austin; and his brother, Edward Devine.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Jim's memory to the American Heart Association.

He will be deeply missed and forever remembered for a life lived with purpose, service, and integrity.

### 11<sup>th</sup> District, cont'd from page 2

some of which have been conducted in Northern Virginia.

Responding to an audience question on Social Security solvency and policies, Whitson said, "The best way to keep Social Security solid is to promote work over welfare. And right now we have millions of able-bodied adults...that are sitting on the sideline and not engaging in the workforce."

Walkinshaw said "Social Securi-

ty solvency is a challenging problem, but it's a math problem right now. The tax on Social Security is capped, and a billionaire pays the exact same dollar amount as a two-income family living right here in Fairfax County." He also said welcoming younger immigrants to work and pay taxes into the retirement fund "is the best way to ensure the solvency of Social Security."

Each candidate described what their first legislative move would be if elected:

Whitson said it would be the "Regulations from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny Act," requiring "congressional preapproval before the executive branch could spend \$100 million or more on a new rule or regulation."

Walkinshaw said he would "introduce legislation to defund DOGE and legislation to restore the civil service protections that federal workers need."

The forum was live-streamed by ABC 7 News- WJLA and is available on YouTube.



# THE BULLETIN

## From Ghana to Lake Anne: Nature’s Essentials redefines sesame oil

By Kaydence Smith, Staff Writer

At the weekly Lake Anne Craft Market, adjacent to Reston Farmers Market, a mother-daughter duo is introducing shoppers to the rich flavors and health benefits of fresh-pressed sesame oil. Their product is rooted in tradition and cultivated with care in Ghana.

Nature’s Essentials—soon to be known as Abeya Oils—is a Black-owned, woman-owned business born from a personal mission. Founder Ekua Ankuma launched the venture in the early days of the pandemic, inspired by her desire to work alongside and care for her parents in Ghana. The idea took shape through long conversations with family during visits home and eventually crystallized around one powerful, versatile ingredient: sesame.

“There aren’t many sesame oils coming out of West Africa,” Ekua explained. “We wanted to change that.”

What sets Abeya Oils apart is its trans-

parent, ethical supply chain and deep commitment to freshness. The sesame seeds are grown and harvested primarily by women farmers in Ghana, then either toasted or left raw before being pressed into oil in small batches. Some batches are bottled locally in Ghana, while others are shipped to the U.S. for bottling.

Unlike mass-market sesame oils—which often pass through multiple countries and sit on shelves for months—Abeya’s oils arrive fresh and fragrant, sometimes just weeks after harvest. The difference is unmistakable. “At the farmers market, we love doing tastings,” said Araba Ankuma, Ekua’s daughter. “People try it and their eyes light up. They had no idea sesame oil could taste like this.”

The product line is divided into two categories: culinary and cosmetic. On the culinary side, Abeya offers three sesame oil varieties—untoasted, lightly toasted, and toasted—ideal for everything from vinaigrettes to marinades to air-fried

vegetables. On the beauty side, the team has developed body oils and hair serums rich in antioxidants, vitamins E and K, and essential fatty acids. Customers have reported smoother skin, stronger hair, and other benefits. The team is currently conducting informal research to track results across different hair types.

But beyond the products, Nature’s Essentials is about community. The company works directly with women farmers in Ghana to provide tools, financial support, and fair-trade compensation. “It’s a small way to support their well-being,” said a Nature’s Essentials spokesperson.

Looking ahead, the duo hopes to bring their products to select grocery stores that share their mission and values, while continuing to expand their cosmetic line. Their rebrand, currently underway, will include a fresh new look under the name Abeya, a tribute to their family and cultural heritage.

Still, the heart of the business remains



Photo contributed by Nature's Essentials

rooted in personal connection. “That’s the most rewarding part—connecting directly with people,” they said. “We are so grateful to every customer who supports us. None of this would be possible without them.”

You can find Abeya at the Lake Anne Craft Market on Saturday mornings and on Instagram at @abeya.oils.

### Regatta, cont'd from page 1

around the buoy. In addition to the main event, this year’s crowd witnessed a special moment between a loving couple when a man got down on bended knee and publicly proposed to his girlfriend on the dock after arriving on a boat with a four-piece jazz band (she said yes!). While the event was free to spectators, VIP seating provided front row shaded viewing for \$50, which included a \$25 gift card to Open Road Distillery.

Spectators eagerly anticipate the imaginative designs created by the teams each year. Prior to the races, the boats are displayed on the plaza, allowing the crowd to admire the creations. This year’s winner for the People’s Choice Award for best design went to Starkist’s boat Fin-2Win. The prizes for the fastest boats

went to Buoyancy Operated Aquatic Transport (BOAT) for 1st place, Reston Association’s SS Reston for second place, and Restoration Church’s Unsinkable Hope for third place. The Titanic Award was given to 123 Junk, as it was the boat that sank most dramatically, delighting the crowd with its spectacular demise. Finally, at the end of the races, all the boats were invited back into the water for a group race for a second chance to win a prize, and Unsinkable Hope won yet again.

The Lake Anne Cardboard Boat Regatta delivered a day of connection, creativity, and unforgettable moments. All proceeds from registration fees and sponsorships benefit Reston Museum’s mission of preserving the past, informing the present, and influencing the future of Reston through its educational programming, archives and exhibitions.



Buoyancy Operated Aquatic Transport (BOAT) won the fastest boat award (Top).  
Photos by Patricia Kovacs

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### From the editor...

I can’t believe it’s already back-to-school season! I hope you’ve enjoyed some of what Reston has to offer in the summers. If you’re just picking this paper up for the first time, I want you to know our story in a nutshell: I’m a high school teacher and started this newspaper three years ago. We’re community-supported news and funded solely by advertising and donations. Contributors are all volunteers who love Reston and want to build up our community with good news by keeping local stories alive. Our articles can also be found on our website ([therestonletter.com](http://therestonletter.com)) and we have an active social media presence. We are interested in YOUR ideas for stories. If you’d like to help with our cause through your skills, please reach out to [info@therestonletter.com](mailto:info@therestonletter.com)

**Dawn Crosson**  
Owner/Editor



# THE BULLETIN

## It’s the grand opening of Dano’s Granola in Reston!

By Reston Letter Staff

Dano's Granola hosts a popular table at the Reston Farmers Market each Saturday, and their granola can even be found at Wegmans. Now Dano's will also operate out of its brand-new Reston location. Come join them Sept. 6 as they celebrate the official opening of their new store with a granola and wine tasting after the ribbon cutting ceremony, live DJ, and lots of samples.

At noon there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony hosted by Fairfax County Business Development

and the Reston Chamber of Commerce at Dano's new location at 11495 Sunset Hills Road. The celebration will continue until 3 pm.

Meet the team of people behind Dano's Granola and learn more about their delicious products. Tour their new space, and discover what makes their gluten-free, vegan, and superfood-packed products so special.

The \$5 ticket price will be donated to Cornerstones, a nonprofit helping those who need food, housing, childcare, and financial assistance.

Sign up for the ribbon cutting ceremony, live DJ, and lots of samples by scanning the QR code.



Learn the inspiration behind Dano's Granola and take in their new space on Sept. 6. Photo contributed by Dania Abimourched

## A new neighbor at the Lake: Café Anne opens its doors

By Kaydence Smith, Staff Writer

If you’re looking for a taste of something new at Lake Anne, Café Anne’s vibrant menu of North African dishes and house-made ice cream offers a delicious place to start.

This recent addition to Lake Anne Plaza is already turning heads with its bold, flavorful cuisine. Café Anne sources its meats from Safa Halal Mart in Falls Church and its baguettes from Baguette Republic in Sterling, ensuring that every sandwich, platter, and salad begins with high-quality, locally sourced ingredients.

On the savory side, the standout dish is merguez, a spicy lamb sausage traditionally found in North African cuisine.

While it’s the most popular entrée, the café also offers a variety of proteins, including tofu, chicken, and seafood, to suit different tastes. These mains are served with a selection of flavorful side dishes and house-made sauces, the most popular of which is a spicy mango sauce. Café Anne also caters to a wide range of dietary needs, offering gluten-free, vegan, and vegetarian options.

After your meal, don’t skip dessert. The café serves up an irresistible selection that includes brownies, chocolate mousse, fruit tarts, and—most notably—house-made ice cream. All chocolate-based desserts feature Belgian chocolate, and the ice cream is made simply with milk, sugar, and fruit—nothing more.

During my visit, I enjoyed the lamb sausage, turkey bacon Brussels sprouts, and Okinawa sweet potato for lunch, followed by an iced latte and blueberry ice cream for dessert. The manager was exceptionally kind and accommodating of my gluten allergy, making for a warm and memorable experience.

Café Anne is open Tuesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., with an early opening at 9:30 a.m. on Saturdays for the Reston Farmers Market.

Whether you’re stopping by for lunch, coffee, or just a scoop of ice cream, Café Anne offers more than great food. With attentive service, bold flavors, and a shaded patio by the lake, it’s poised to become a new local favorite.



Café Anne's lamb merguez sausage on a baguette with spicy mango sauce and curry mustard sauce

## Whole Foods Market opens bigger, better location

By Ellyn Wexler, Staff Writer

Hundreds of eager shoppers lined up along Fountain Drive to welcome the opening of Whole Foods Market’s brand-new Reston location on the morning of Aug. 6. The 46,711-square-foot store—nearly double the size of its predecessor on Plaza America Drive—ushers in a new era of grocery shopping with expanded offerings, smart technology, and a renewed commitment to local producers and community giving.

Shoppers who arrived early were rewarded for their enthusiasm. The first 300 received a reusable tote and a surprise discount worth up to \$100. Another 500 customers got a limited-edition Dash Cart tote, celebrating the debut of Amazon’s smart cart technology that allows customers to scan items and skip the checkout line.

Inside, the store feels both vibrant and welcoming. Natural light floods wide aisles stocked with a curated selection of more than 400 local products—everything from produce and baked goods to beer and body care. Daniela D’Ambrosio, Whole Foods’ Local Forager for the Mid-Atlantic region, played a key role in

bringing these local finds to the shelves. Through the grocer’s Local and Emerging Accelerator Program (LEAP), she helps small producers like Bon Appétit, Myles Comfort Foods, and One Trick Pony develop and scale up to meet Whole Foods’ high standards.

In the produce section, shoppers will find tomatoes, cucumbers, and zucchini from Lancaster Farms, eggplants from Superfood, and assorted vegetables from Color Orchids—all certified organic, conventional, or Sourced for Good. A full-service seafood counter features Ivy City Smokehouse’s smoked salmon and crabmeat from JM Clayton, while the butcher counter serves custom cuts and grass-fed beef from Grayson Farms.

The new store boasts a full-service coffee bar and expanded bakery stocked with vegan cakes from Sweet and Natural and pies and cookies from Whisked by Jenna. More than 220 craft beers and 530 wines line the beverage section, including selections from The Veil, Aslin Brewing, and Potter’s Cider.

Whole Foods Market continues to give back to its community. The Reston store supports Northern Virginia Food Rescue through its Nourishing Our Neighborhoods program and partners



Opening Day attracted hundreds of curious customers to the new location. Photo by Benjamin Burgess

locally with Cornerstones and Anna Sudha Community Kitchens.

As D’Ambrosio reflects, “Growing our local selection means giving emerging producers a real shot—this new store allows us to do that in an even more meaningful way.”


At 1861 Fountain Drive, the new Reston Whole Foods Market is more than just a place to shop. It’s a community hub, a showcase for innovation, and a proud celebration of all things local.



# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <div>15</div> <div>AUG</div> <div>Wine and Beer Tasting</div>     | <div>16</div> <div>AUG</div> <div>Reston Farmers Market</div>                    | <div>16</div> <div>AUG</div> <div>Lake Anne Craft Market</div>                     | <div>16</div> <div>AUG</div> <div>Reston Concerts on the Town</div> |
| <div>15</div> <div>AUG</div> <div>Toy Story in Window Plaza</div> | <div>16</div> <div>AUG</div> <div>Dog Paddle Events</div>                        | <div>16</div> <div>AUG</div> <div>Sit, Stitch, and Yarn Exchange</div>             | <div>17</div> <div>AUG</div> <div>Sunday Funday</div>               |
| <div>22</div> <div>AUG</div> <div>Fab Fridays Summerbration</div> | <div>23</div> <div>AUG</div> <div>Back to School Bash</div>                      | <div>23</div> <div>AUG</div> <div>Kid's Entrepreneur Market</div>                  | <div>24</div> <div>AUG</div> <div>Open House at NVHC</div>          |
| <div>27</div> <div>AUG</div> <div>Free Senior Movie day</div>     | <div>2</div> <div>SEPT</div> <div>Environmental Advisory Committee Meeting</div> | <div>6</div> <div>SEPT</div> <div>F45 Training Fitness Class in the Pavilion</div> | <div>6</div> <div>SEPT</div> <div>Reggae on the Lake</div>          |

|  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| <p><b>Wine and Beer tasting</b><br/><b>Every Friday 4-7:30 p.m.</b><br/>The Wine Cabinet North Point Village Center</p> <p><b>Reston Farmers Market</b><br/><b>Every Saturday through 11/22 9 a.m.-noon</b><br/>Parking lot of Lake Anne Village Center</p> <p><b>Lake Anne Craft Market</b><br/><b>Every Saturday until 11/22 except 9/6 9 a.m.-1 p.m.</b><br/>Lake Anne Plaza</p> <p><b>Reston Concerts on the Town</b><br/><b>8/16 and 8/23 7:30-10 p.m</b><br/>Town Center Pavilion</p> <p><b>Toy Story in Window Plaza</b><br/><b>8/15 6 p.m.</b><br/><b>(Movie begins at 8:15 PM)</b><br/>Meet the ToyBoxBuddies</p> | <p>and enjoy free face painting beforehand.<br/>Between 1950 and 2000 Opportunity Way</p> <p><b>Dog Paddle events</b><br/><b>8/16, 17, 23, 30 and 9/6 8:30 a.m.</b><br/>Bring your dog for a dip in a pool that has closed. Proof of a current dog license or current vaccinations required. Register @ reston.org</p> <p><b>Sip, Stitch, and Yarn exchange</b><br/><b>8/16 10 a.m.-1 p.m.</b><br/>Every Saturday<br/>Elden Street Tea Shop</p> <p><b>Sunday Funday</b><br/><b>8/17 10 a.m.</b><br/>Bring your towels, smiles, and get ready for the splash pads!<br/>Free ice cream treat<br/>Reston Town Center</p> | <p><b>Fab Fridays Summerbration</b><br/><b>Fridays through 9/5 7-8:30 p.m.</b><br/>Featuring tribute bands<br/>Reston Station</p> <p><b>Back to School Bash</b><br/><b>8/23 10 a.m.</b><br/>Family fun and annual Children's Entrepreneur Market: live music, face painting, character appearances, games<br/>Reston Town Center</p> <p><b>Kid's Entrepreneur Market</b><br/><b>8/23 10 a.m.</b><br/>A market run entirely by kids!<br/>kidsmarkets.com/<br/>Reston Town Center</p> <p><b>Open House at NVHC</b><br/><b>8/24 2 p.m.</b><br/>Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation<br/>Learn how they create community, meet clergy</p> | <p>1441 Wiehle Ave</p> <p><b>Free Senior Movie Day</b><br/><b>8/27 9:15 a.m.</b> 55+<br/>Coffee, donuts, and OJ<br/>11940 Market Street<br/>LOOK Dine-In Cinemas</p> <p><b>Environmental Advisory Committee Meeting</b><br/><b>9/2 6:30 p.m.</b><br/>12001 Sunrise Valley Drive</p> <p><b>F45 Training Fitness Class in the Pavilion</b><br/><b>9/6 9 a.m.</b><br/>Free high energy outdoor workout session<br/>11900 Market St.</p> <p><b>Reggae on the Lake- fourth annual</b><br/><b>9/6 1 p.m.</b><br/>Music, food, and fun<br/>reggaeonthelake.com<br/>Lake Anne Plaza</p> |
|--|---|--|---|

| <div><div>RESTON AQUATICS</div><div>2025 Pool Schedule</div></div> |                                  |                                  |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| SEASON 4 (August 16 - Sept. 1)<br>includes Labor Day weekend  | SATURDAY                         | SUNDAY                           | MONDAY   | TUESDAY  | WEDNESDAY                                      | THURSDAY                                       | FRIDAY   |
| Dogwood Pool  | 12 - 6 p.m.                      | 12 - 6 p.m.                      | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | CLOSED   | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     |
| Lake Newport Pool   | 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.                 | 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.                 | 1 - 7 p.m.                                     | 1 - 7 p.m.                                     | 1 - 7 p.m.                                     | 1 - 7 p.m.                                     | CLOSED   |
| Lake Thoreau Pool & Spa   | 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.                 | 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.                 | Open 4 - 7 p.m.<br>Fitness 7-9 p.m.            | Open 4 - 7 p.m.<br>Fitness 7-9 p.m.            | Open 4 - 7 p.m.<br>Fitness 7-9 p.m.            | Open 4 - 7 p.m.<br>Fitness 7-9 p.m.            | Open 4 - 7 p.m.<br>Fitness 7-9 p.m.            |
| North Hills Pool & Spa  | 12 - 6 p.m.                      | 12 - 6 p.m.                      | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | CLOSED   | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     |
| North Shore Heated Pool & Spa   | 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.                 | 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.                 | Open 4 - 7 p.m.<br>Fitness 6-9 a.m. & 7-9 p.m. | Open 4 - 7 p.m.<br>Fitness 6-9 a.m. & 7-9 p.m. | Open 4 - 7 p.m.<br>Fitness 6-9 a.m. & 7-9 p.m. | Open 4 - 7 p.m.<br>Fitness 6-9 a.m. & 7-9 p.m. | Open 4 - 7 p.m.<br>Fitness 6-9 a.m. & 7-9 p.m. |
| Ridge Heights Heated Pool   | 12 - 6 p.m.                      | 12 - 6 p.m.                      | 1 - 7 p.m.                                     | 1 - 7 p.m.                                     | 1 - 7 p.m.                                     | CLOSED   | 1 - 7 p.m.                                     |
| Shadowood Heated Pool   | 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.                 | 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.                 | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | CLOSED   | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     |
| Tall Oaks Pool  | 12 - 6 p.m.                      | 12 - 6 p.m.                      | CLOSED   | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     |
| SEASON 5 (Sept. 2 - Sept. 21)   | SATURDAY                         | SUNDAY                           | MONDAY   | TUESDAY  | WEDNESDAY                                      | THURSDAY                                       | FRIDAY   |
| Lake Newport Pool   | FITNESS SWIM ONLY<br>12 - 6 p.m. | FITNESS SWIM ONLY<br>12 - 6 p.m. | FITNESS SWIM ONLY<br>4 - 7 p.m.                | FITNESS SWIM ONLY<br>4 - 7 p.m.                | FITNESS SWIM ONLY<br>4 - 7 p.m.                | FITNESS SWIM ONLY<br>4 - 7 p.m.                | CLOSED   |
| North Shore Heated Pool & Spa   | 12 - 6 p.m.                      | 12 - 6 p.m.                      | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     |
| Ridge Heights Heated Pool   | 12 - 6 p.m.                      | 12 - 6 p.m.                      | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     | 4 - 7 p.m.                                     |

# LIFETIME

## A summer like no other

By Scott Parkin,  
Reston for a Lifetime

While listening to three violinists perform in Reston's Town Square last Sunday evening, I took a moment to look around at the audience. At least half—perhaps more—were older adults enjoying the free outdoor concert. As the Shenandoah Conservatory's performance came to a close, the emcee announced a record crowd of 500 people in attendance.

For many older adults—and especially the elderly—healthy aging means living in a community that offers not only a vibrant cultural life but also meaningful opportunities for engagement. Whether it's Sundays at Town Square Park, Saturday night concerts at Reston Town Center, live music on Fridays at Reston Station, or the Wednesday Sunset series at Lake Anne, Reston's summer programming is something special.

And it's not just cultural events that enrich life here. Many activities are designed specifically to foster connection and participation. Today, the new Reston Community Center activities guide arrived in

the mail. As I browsed through it, I found not only more musical offerings for fall and winter, but also lectures, classes, and a wide range of programs for all ages, each promoting engagement and community.

You've likely read about the growing epidemic of loneliness in our society, particularly among older Americans. Writers like my friend Dr. William Thomas have written extensively about the three plagues of old age: loneliness, boredom and helplessness. An advocate for culture change related to long-term care facilities, Bill has also written about how those plagues can affect the elderly, especially those aging alone.

By offering a rich cultural landscape and endless ways to connect, Reston helps combat those plagues for residents of every age. It's just one more reason our community remains so livable—and so special.

*Scott L. Parkin is president of Reston for a Lifetime (www.RestonforaLifetime.org), a nonprofit organization with a mission to inform and educate residents about how to age in place. He has lived in Reston since 1986.*

## What most people get wrong about Sciatica: top three mistakes

By Taruna Rijhwani, Health Watchers PT

After years of helping people manage sciatica, we've seen many unintentionally make choices that worsen their symptoms—sometimes before they even get a chance to seek professional help. If you're dealing with sciatica or a pinched nerve, avoiding these three common mistakes can make a big difference in your recovery.

### Mistake #1: Stretching the Painful Leg

One of the most common missteps is stretching the leg with sciatica symptoms, assuming the pain stems from tight muscles. In reality, this can be one of the worst things you can do. When you have sciatica, the nerve is already inflamed and irritated. Stretching it may only increase that irritation and intensify your pain. Unless you have a clear diagnosis from a professional, avoid stretching the painful leg. It's critical to understand what's causing your symptoms before attempting self-treatment.

### Mistake #2: Pushing Through Painful Activities

Another frequent mistake is continuing activities, exercises, or even sitting positions that aggravate the pain. If you're experiencing leg pain that originates in the spine, and a specific movement or position makes it worse—stop. For instance, if prolonged sitting increases your symptoms, try standing up and walking around. Walking can improve circulation to the affected nerve and may reduce irritation. Don't "tough it out" or push through movements that cause more pain—it only delays healing.

### Mistake #3: Waiting Too Long to Seek Help

The third major mistake? Waiting too long to get professional care. If you're experiencing radiating pain down your leg, early action is key. The longer you wait, the more aggravated the nerve can become, making recovery more difficult and drawn out. Prompt diagnosis and treatment allow your body to start healing sooner and reduce the risk of needing medications, injections, or invasive procedures later on.

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# EDUCATION

## Teacher turns years of classroom experience into YouTube literacy business

By Emma Kingkeo,  
Reston Letter Intern

Whenever she has a moment away from her bustling household, Stephanie Krasij retreats to a peaceful corner of her home, props up her phone, and hits record. Drawing on years of experience as a part-time teacher, she creates short instructional videos to help children learn to read and write.

“I’ve been a mom for so long; it’s been fun to put my energy into something where I can help others and use the skills I’ve gained over the years to give back to the community,” she said.

Krasij launched her YouTube channel, “Learn to Read with Stephanie,” six months ago as a way to offer extra support to her students. “When I was teaching part-time and my kids were younger, I also tutored on the side. Parents would often ask, ‘What else can I do?’ It seemed like there was a gap in structured support,” she said. What began as a small project for her classroom has grown into a resource she hopes will reach early readers everywhere.

Just a few months after starting the channel, Krasij received unexpected news: due to budget cuts, she would not be returning to her longtime role as a part-time teacher this year. Now, she’s working to expand her channel into a sustainable business. Her goal is to generate income through YouTube ad revenue and the sale of digital learning resources, such as printables and guided activities that complement her videos and reinforce key reading skills.

Reading intervention has always held a special place in Krasij’s heart. She traces her passion back to her first teaching job in a first-grade classroom—that magical year when many children first unlock their reading potential.

“I was really excited to see first-graders start out not knowing how to read, and then by the end of the year, they could. It’s just a magical experience,” she said.

Before becoming a teacher, Krasij earned a degree in media arts and design in the early 2000s. Comfortable with cameras and editing long before social media became ubiquitous, she saw an opportunity to merge her creative and educational skills.

“It’s been a lot of learning over the last couple of months,” she said. “The real challenge has been figuring out how to make videos that are engaging while also sticking to systematic instruction.”

Each video features easy-to-follow lessons and visual graphics that help students connect letters and sounds. While her content is designed so a child can follow along independently, Krasij believes her lessons can help anyone who needs extra reading support, including adults learning English.

Her teaching began with a balanced literacy approach, which uses picture clues and context to help students make meaning from text. Over time, though, her instruction has shifted to a systematic phonics method that emphasizes consistent letter-sound relationships. This approach, she believes, builds confidence

and skills—students may not know every word, but they can break it down and decode it.

“The foundational step in reading is being able to hear a word like ‘cat’ and know it has three separate sounds. Each lesson adds a new component,” she explained.

While handwriting isn’t the primary focus, her videos also feature simple animations that show students how to form letters correctly.

In just six months, Krasij has already seen encouraging results. Former students and friends have reported that children struggling to keep up in class have made noticeable gains through her videos. One early success story came from a student who had fallen behind and was receiving extra help at school.

“He still wasn’t on grade level in the second half of the year. He started watching my videos, and his teachers asked his mom, ‘Did you hire a tutor?’ That was awesome to hear,” she said.

She believes the short, straightforward nature of her lessons helps kids stay focused and retain what they learn. “Sometimes, if a teacher is long-winded, students tune out,” she said. “My videos are concise and build on themselves. Kids know what to expect—they’re familiar with the format.”

Looking ahead, Krasij hopes to expand her content to cover more advanced reading and writing skills—up to second or third grade—and to offer additional resources to help parents support literacy learning at home.



When she was destaffed from teaching, due to budget cuts, Stephanie Krasij began to focus fulltime on her online literacy program.  
Photo contributed by Stephanie Krasij

Scan to check out  
Stephanie's YouTube  
channel!



## 11-year-old becomes one of Reston's youngest Eagle Scouts

By Megan Schmid, Staff Writer

At just 11 years old, Caleb Schweitzer has achieved what many Scouts spend years working toward: the prestigious rank of Eagle Scout. Eagle Scout is the highest rank attainable in the Scouts BSA program of Scouting America. Since its inception in 1911, only about four percent of Scouts have earned this rank, with most recipients be-

tween the ages of 15 and 17.

Caleb’s Scouting journey began in kindergarten when he joined Pack 1313 at Sunrise Valley Elementary School as a Lion Cub. Thanks to an accelerated academic path at the Academy of Christian Education in Reston, he was eligible to join Scouts earlier than most. He has since moved to Troop 157 in Herndon, where he recently completed the requirements for Eagle Scout.

For his Eagle Scout service project, Caleb gave back to his school community by building a GaGa Ball pit. The increasingly popular game is played in a hexagonal structure that allows for a fast-paced, safe variant of dodgeball. Caleb spent a total of 84 hours planning, constructing, and completing the project, leaving a lasting legacy for students to enjoy for years to come.

To celebrate his achievement, Caleb was thrilled to receive the long-awaited cell phone he had been hoping for from his parents. He will also be formally honored at an Eagle Court of Honor ceremony—often attended by public officials—in the coming months.

But Caleb is far from done. He will begin Langston Hughes Middle School this fall and plans to continue his Scouting journey with the goal of earning the Distinguished Conservation Service Award (DCSA), one of the rarest honors in Scouting America. Fewer than 1,100 youth medals have been awarded in over a century.

“Scouting is more than a place to camp and tie knots,” Caleb explained. “Scouting



Photos contributed by Laura Schweitzer

is a place to make memories and friends you remember and cherish for a very long time. It’s a place to learn real skills like how to work together and how to be prepared. Scouting is more than troops and ranks—Scouting is a family.”

We can’t wait to see which conservation issue Caleb tackles next to help shape Reston’s future.



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8



# EDUCATION

Making an Impact

## Kelli Bullard Dunn, MD

By Chuck Cascio, Author and Former South Lakes Teacher

The myriad achievements of Dr. Kelli Bullard Dunn are rooted in many formative experiences. She says the “range of diverse people, cultures, and ideas” she was exposed to growing up in Reston significantly influenced her career, as did the intense academic programs at South Lakes High School, from which she graduated in 1984.

One especially pivotal opportunity at SLHS occurred when she was given the chance to take Advanced Placement Biology despite not having taken the Biology I prerequisite.

“I did not have any particular interest in biology, but when I approached Faye Cascio—whom I had in seventh-grade Introduction to Physical Science and whom I admired—about potentially taking AP Bio, she told me that if I read the biology textbook over the summer, I could enroll in her class.” Kelli says she read the entire textbook “on the beach, from cover to cover, and it was in that class that I found my academic passion. I studied hard, but it didn’t feel like work.”

Work came later for Kelli. She graduated from Stanford University with a degree in Human Biology, a program she describes as “a unique interdisciplinary major that, at the time, incorporated social sciences such as psychology, sociology, and an-

thropology with more traditional biology like biochemistry, anatomy, and more. Those integrated units explored ways that human interactions with one another and with the environment influence biology, evolution, health, and disease—things we now call ‘Social Determinants of Health.’”

With her commitment to biology firmly established, Kelli pursued a medical career and graduated from Harvard Medical School. “I ultimately decided to become a surgeon,” she says, “not only because it was really hard and not many women pursued this career in the 1990s, but also because it incorporated the intellectual components of medicine with active interventions. Plus...operating is really fun!”

With her career as a colorectal surgeon well established, Kelli saw other opportunities to expand her impact through research and teaching. She has lived in 13 cities (“So far,” she says), and has spent her career at universities and medical schools “where teaching and research are an integral part of what I do, in addition to clinical care of patients.”

Kelli and her husband, and their daughter and son, now live in Louisville, Kentucky. In 2011, Kelli began working with the University of Louisville School of Medicine, where she created the Office of Community Engagement (OCE) that merges the university’s medical knowledge with the private and public sectors. “We have integrated community engage-

ment and engaged scholarship in all of the missions of the medical school, from clinical training to research,” Kelli says, “and we have developed new curricula and secured resources for scholarships and innovation.”

Through the work of the OCE, Kelli also has become increasingly involved with a number of community organizations, public schools, and nonprofits, as well as frequently interacting with political leaders on health policies at the local, state, and federal levels. Of particular importance, Kelli notes, is that “We have targeted programs in high schools with significant populations of students from marginalized and economically underprivileged backgrounds; for example, we have a ‘Mini Medical School’ program at Central High where, it must be noted, Muhammad Ali was a student!” The impact of the OCE program has been profound, doubling the enrollment of underrepresented students in medicine over the past four years.

“Reflecting on my career, I realize that I have gained the greatest satisfaction from teaching and mentorship, whether it is from high school students in our pipeline programs or faculty who want to start community-based projects,” Kelli says. “My daughter thinks I should retire and teach high school biology, which sounds very appealing to me and brings me full circle back to Faye Cascio, my mentor at



Kelli Bullard Dunn, MD

South Lakes.”

Kelli appreciates how, during her teen years, the diversity of people, cultures, and experiences in Reston steadily influenced her life’s direction. “Growing up in Reston, I thought inclusion was just the norm, and it led me to embrace differences of all types,” she says. “Reston’s environment shaped many of the values I hold today that have led me to my work in health equity as well as clinical medicine. This had a profound influence on my personal and professional paths. I feel incredibly lucky to have lived there and would move back in a nanosecond!”

## Reston educators join forces to build homes in Guatemala

By Reston Letter Staff

A team of Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) educators and community members recently traveled to San Pedro Las Huertas, Guatemala, where they volunteered their time, energy, and resources to build homes for families in need. The group partnered with From Houses to Homes, a nonprofit based in Antigua, Guatemala, that supports families through housing, education, and medical programs.

Dogwood Elementary School Principal Kate Beckner, who has volunteered with the organization since 2012, led the June 23 to 27 service trip. She was joined by fellow FCPS educators Jason Ericson and Cedric Price (Dogwood Elementary), Frances Delzell (Oakton High School), Chrissy Kelley and Giselle Duran (South Lakes High School), and Ashley Senior (Centreville High School). Also on the team were Willson York, an FCPS parent, and Colin McQuarrie, a South Lakes High School graduate.

Over five days, the group completed two new homes for sisters from the Garia-Arias family. Both are single mothers raising children with limited resources and no paternal support. The women earn a modest income by preparing and selling tortillas from their open-air kitchens.

Each new home included bunk beds, a smokeless stove, and a water filtration system—basic essentials that provide life-changing improvements. For the first



FCPS teachers and volunteers, led by Dogwood Elementary’s principal Kate Beckner, helped build homes in Guatemala in June. Photos contributed by Kate Beckner

time, these families will have a door they can lock, a roof to keep them dry, and the safety and dignity of a place to call their own.

In addition to housing, From Houses to Homes helps families access education and healthcare and supports them in building sustainable futures. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization has experienced a steep decline in fund-

ing and volunteer participation, even as community needs continue to grow.

Principal Beckner shared that for anyone seeking a meaningful, hands-on opportunity to make a difference, From Houses to Homes offers a truly transformative experience.

To learn more or get involved, visit [FromHousestoHomes.org](http://FromHousestoHomes.org).

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# EDUCATION

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

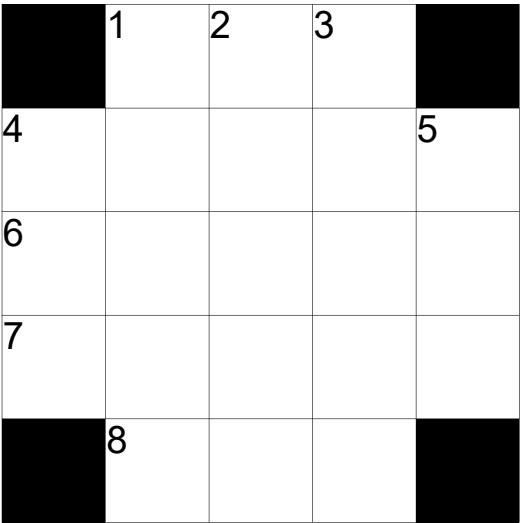
### Catch Some Zs

ACROSS

- 1. Petting \_\_\_\_
- 4. Nada, diddly or squat
- 6. "Tis \_\_\_\_!" (something regrettable)
- 7. Needle and cone bearers
- 8. Big name in talks

DOWN

- 1. "Button your lip!"
- 2. Express a viewpoint
- 3. Declined, with "out"
- 4. Heat in the microwave
- 5. Yiddish laments



## South Lakes Chorus program: building harmony in Reston

By Erin Gibbens, Staff Writer

When Emily Moser stepped into South Lakes High School last year as their new Choral Director, she brought an inspiring vision: "Music has the power to bring people together," Ms. Moser says, and her first year has been about inspiring the students to make that happen.

Her approach extends beyond the classroom, connecting to the wider Reston community through performances, collaborations, and outreach that blends artistry with service. From singing at community events to partnering with local organizations, the South Lakes Chorus is strengthening the bonds between school and community.

For Ms. Moser, it's not only about perfecting harmonies. "I want students to see that what we do in the classroom has a place in the real world," she explains. "Our music belongs to the community as much as it belongs to us."

It's the everyday moments: mentoring younger singers, sharing the stage with other artists, and bring-

ing choral music into the community that's helping to build something even more important for students in her program: a sense of belonging.

Ms. Moser is a recent graduate of Florida International University with a master's degree in Choral Conducting, she has built a diverse and accomplished career teaching music to elementary and high school students, directing award-winning choirs, plays, and musicals, and founding new ensembles like the FIU Treble Choir and Chiaro Singers. Her leadership extends beyond the classroom, from serving as choir board president and NAFME secretary at Minnesota State University to co-founding the a cappella group "Solfire" and performing with esteemed groups such as the Festival Singers of Florida. Recognized with numerous honors, including the Minnesota ACDA's F. Melius Christiansen Scholarship Award and FIU's Graduate Performance Award. Ms. Moser is an innovative leader who brings a rare blend



Emily Moser has brought fresh vision to the SLHS Choral program. Photo contributed by Emily Moser

of warmth, artistry, and vision to South Lakes and the whole Reston community.

Under Ms. Moser's leadership, South Lakes Chorus is a place where students grow as artists, citizens, and friends, discovering their voices in more ways than one. As their beautiful voices fill the air in Reston, it's clear this is just the beginning for her South Lakes choral program.

## Local educator honored with statewide award

Contributed by Rachael E. Domer, Technology and Engineering Education, FCPS

Paul Davis has been named the recipient of the 2025 Middle School Program of the Year award by the Virginia Technology & Engineering Education Association (VTEEA), one of the highest honors a Technology & Engineering educator can receive in the state.

The award recognizes Davis's exceptional commitment to

building and sustaining one of the strongest middle school programs in Virginia. His dedication to innovation, hands-on learning, and student engagement has had a lasting impact, both within his school community and across the state.

In addition to this statewide recognition, Davis will be honored at the national level during the International Technology & Engineering Education Association (ITEEA) Conference in March 2026 in Virginia Beach.



Langston Hughes Middle School Technology and Engineering teacher Paul Davis will be nationally honored in March. Photo contributed by LHMS



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# EDUCATION

## South Lakes varsity womens volleyball team wins national award with combined 3.61 GPA

Contributed by  
SLHS Athletics

The 2024 Seahawk Varsity Volleyball Team has been awarded the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) Team Academic Award for the second consecutive year! This award is given each year to high schools and colleges whose Varsity teams achieve a minimum of a 3.3 GPA for the entire school year. South Lakes is one of only six Virginia high schools to win this award in 2024. In addition, South Lakes was awarded the Team Honor Roll for being in the top 20% of high schools. The team achieved a 3.61 GPA!



You can read all the details about the award by going to:

<https://www.avca.org/award/2025-avca-team-academic-award-sponsored-by-intent/>

**Huge congrats to our 2024 South Lakes High School Varsity Volleyball Team:**  
Rhea, Jamie, Eva, Lliana, Sena, Ava, Jessica, Carolina, Lindsay, Keira, Sydney, Laila, Rasika, Carmen, Maggie, Ella, Tori  
Photo contributed by SLHS Athletics

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# KIDS

## Back-to-school trends you'll love this year

By Erin Gibbens, Kids Section Co-Editor

It’s almost time to head back to school! Whether you’re excited, nervous, or a mix of both, starting a new school year is so much fun when you can show off your style.

This year, it’s all about personalization, making your stuff look like you. Popular themes include FIFA World Cup 2026, Minecraft, Labubu, anime, and kawaii-themed finds. Sensory things with cool textures or sounds are also favorites.

### Backpacks, Lunch Boxes & Water Bottles

Pick a backpack that’s both stylish and practical, with extra pockets to keep things organized. Add a fun keychain to your bag (and maybe your lunch box) to show off your personality. Don’t forget a water bottle. If the one you have works great, keep it. But if you need a new one, Owala and Stanley Flip Straw Tumblers are current kid-favorites.

### School Supplies

Pastel and kawaii-themed supplies are big this year... think cute animals, characters, and soft colors. Choose a pencil pouch that matches your style, fill it with colorful gel pens, and decorate your notebooks with stickers to make them your own.

### Clothing

Comfort is still super important! Bright colors and bold prints are everywhere. A big trend is picking one standout piece (like a bright t-shirt or cool socks) and mixing it with the clothes you already have. Crocs are still popular, and sneakers are a must for PE.

Thrift shopping is also a huge trend for all ages. Kids love hunting for unique graphic tees at places

like Unique or Savers, or online at Depop or ThredUp.

Want to make your clothes even more your style? Try repurposing or upcycling. Buy something at a thrift store and use your craft skills to turn it into something new. There are tons of videos that show how to tie-dye, add patches, or redesign clothes to fit your style.

### Personal Care

Taking care of yourself is in! Kids love face masks, face wash, and moisturizers. Other favorites include Touchland scented hand sanitizer, Fresh Monster deodorant, mini tissue packs, and colorful claw clips.

### Snacks

Don’t forget your favorite snacks for back-to-school. Popular picks this year include mini packs of Takis, Hot Cheetos, freeze-dried fruit, and even wild flavors of everyday snacks like blue raspberry applesauce.

You don’t need all new things to look and feel great. Mixing your old favorites with a few new finds is the perfect way to start the year confident and cool. Happy back to school!



## Ask the Expert: Back to school with Fox Mill AP Anice Denton

As the new school year gets closer, we asked a favorite local educator for her best back-to-school tips.

Assistant Principal, Anice Denton, at Fox Mill Elementary is known for her warm, welcoming smile, her kind heart, and the way she thoughtfully supports students.

She shared her ideas to help you feel more confident, ready, and excited for the year ahead:

### 1. What are some simple things kids can do at home to get ready for the first week of school?

To get ready for the first week of school, I know most administrators would say shift your bedtime and wake up times to what they would be during school days. That’s important, but I would like kids to do something creative, fun and meaningful. Something that will impact the rest of the year.

Along with your parents/caregivers, start building your “comfort item toolbox.” Your toolbox should not take up too much space in your backpack.

Items could be a few affirmation cards or easy quotes, a small item that helps you to feel calm, a photo of someone or something special. Practice going to that toolbox or think of someone you trust at school to keep it until you really need an item from it.

### 2. What should a student do if they’re having a tough day or don’t know who to talk to?

Find the first person you thought of that you wanted on your “go to team.” Having a "go-to person" can make a huge difference when things feel overwhelming or when you just need a moment to regroup.

I’ve always encouraged my students at the beginning of the school year to make a connection with a trusted staff member, and remind them through a simple, casual conversation, for example “I feel comfortable talking to you, and I was hoping it would be okay if I could consider you my 'go-to



Ms. Anice Denton is the assistant principal at Fox Mill Elementary School.  
Photo contributed by FMES

person' if I ever need to talk or just take a quick break during the school day."

### 3. What do you wish every student knew about school that could help them have a great year?

Think of school as a second home; a place with an extra benefit of being filled with many caring adults and friends. School is not just for learning subjects, but a large theatre for cultivating and harvesting unique talents and voices.

### 4. What’s one thing you’re most excited about for this school year?

I am excited to visit classrooms and see the joy and smiles on students' faces as they showcase their growth and talents as articulate communicators and mindful collaborators.

Thank you to Ms. Denton, and all the amazing teachers and staff who help make our schools caring places to grow. We wish all our local students a joyful, confident, and curious start to the school year. Be kind, be brave, and remember, it’s always okay to ask for help.

### QUIZ YOUR PARENTS

by Nora Gibbens, 6<sup>th</sup> grade Fox Mill Elem

Do your parents know Gen Alpha Slang?

1. What is the difference between skibiti and sigma?
2. What is a mewing streak?
3. When would someone cringe?
4. What is ASMR?
5. What does HACS stand for?
6. What is the difference between selling and eating?
7. What does baddie mean?
8. What word is rizz short for?

Score: How many did they get correct?

|                     |                         |                       |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1-3                 | 4-6                     | 7-8                   |
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1. Skibiti tells if something is good or bad, and sigma describes a cool or popular person.  
2. A facial expression that accentuates the jawline, and is held for a long time.  
3. You cringe when something is cheesy or embarrassing.  
4. ASMR is a satisfying sound (like a crunch or pop).  
5. HACS is 'Have a Great Summer, usually in yearbooks.  
6. Selling is doing a bad performance and eating is the opposite (like: 'I ate!').  
7. Baddie - someone is stylish, attractive, or confident.  
8. Charisma, used to describe someone who is charming.

### August Art Magic

FISH! before School starts!

1. draw some fish using crayons
2. make them pretty!
3. brush light blue water color over them and watch them swim!

### ITS MOVIE NIGHT

Back-to-school movies for the family

| Live Action   | Animated   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>School of Rock</li><li>Akeelah and the Bee</li><li>Because of Winn-Dixie</li><li>Wonder</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Indie Out</li><li>Recess: School's Out</li><li>Spelling the Dream</li><li>Monster University</li></ul> |

Common Sense Media  
See which movies are good for your family:



KIDS

Tackling the madness: back-to-school food frenzy

By Alexis Estep, Guest Contributor

This article is best read with your adult, it'll give you both lots of ideas.

Yup, it's hard to believe—but it's almost time to call an end to summer. With this comes all the fury of back-to-school business. From school supply shopping to organizing the family calendar, it can all start to feel a bit overwhelming. Add to that the pressure of packing lunches and making sure your kiddos get a nutritious breakfast, and it can be downright bonkers!

As a former chef, you might think I have it all figured out and that my four kids—ages 10, 9, 7, and 5—have the most sophisticated palates on the block. To that I say, who are you kidding?! I rely on shortcuts and deal with picky eaters just like any other parent. But what I can offer are some tried-and-true suggestions that might make this transition just a little easier.

Breakfast is by far my favorite meal of the day. It's incredibly versatile—you can honestly eat it anytime—and it sets the stage for everything that follows. I love making a big batch of pancakes over the weekend, knowing they can be reheated for breakfast later in the week, used in place of bread for a PB&J, or turned into a casserole when that “breakfast for dinner” craving strikes.

Other breakfast inspirations include:

- Overnight oats: Keep the base a simple vanilla and let the kids add their toppings of choice in the morning
- Green shake– Blend a frozen banana, a handful of spinach, almond milk, and a scoop of vanilla protein powder
- Teddy bear toast: Spread peanut or almond butter on toast and use blueberries for “eyes” and banana slices for “ears” and “nose.”
- Cheesecake jars: These are packed with protein and a touch of whimsy. I won't gate-keep the recipe—who wouldn't want cheesecake for breakfast?

Cheesecake Jars

Ingredients:

- 1 cup whole milk yogurt (I prefer skyr, but Greek works too)
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- 2 tbsp cream cheese
- 1/4 cup maple syrup (adjust to taste)
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- Splash of half & half or heavy cream

To serve:

- Graham cracker crumbs
- Fresh fruit, jam, or stewed fruit

Directions:

Add all of the cheesecake ingredients to a high-speed blender. Blend on low for about a minute to combine, then quickly mix on high to fully incorporate—just be careful not to overmix. You can eat it right away or let it chill in the fridge for an hour or two to firm up. Now for the fun part: grab a jar or bowl, add graham cracker crumbs to your liking, top with the cheesecake

mixture, then finish with fruit. Voila! The best breakfast or snack ever.

My kids love this recipe and have helped me make it several times. From measuring ingredients to blitzing crumbs in the food processor, it's a fun-filled cooking experience for everyone!

Our family believes that moderation is the key to happiness. No food is “off-limits” or “bad.” Different foods have different effects on our bodies. Some provide quick energy, some slow and steady, and others—while they might look appealing or fun—don't always leave us feeling our best. Which brings me to lunch.

Kids enjoy making their own lunches, but they need to be balanced. For example, you can't just eat a pile of crackers or PB pretzels—you need cheese or turkey slices with the crackers, and a fruit or vegetable alongside. The goal is to balance quick energy (carbs) with lasting energy (protein, fat, and fiber).

These lunches often look like DIY Lunchables or 30-second quesadillas—just a tortilla laid flat on a plate, topped with shredded cheese, microwaved for 30 seconds, then folded in half.

You can encourage your kids to make choices that serve both your bodies and your appetites. And try looking at fruit and veggie intake over the week instead of the day. It helps parents keep our sanity when we zoom out and trust that, overall, you're getting what you need.

If you're looking for more inspiration, here are a few food blogs I love:

- [www.pinchofyum.com](http://www.pinchofyum.com)
- [www.therealfooddietitians.com](http://www.therealfooddietitians.com)
- [www.yummytoddlerfood.com](http://www.yummytoddlerfood.com)

Hope this helps you in this back-to-school season! Parents, feel free to drop me a line to share your favorite food blog, kid-feeding hack, or just to offer some parenting solidarity. E-mail: [alexis@estep.io](mailto:alexis@estep.io)



The youngest Estep son making his own cheesecake bowl.

**Back to School**

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Kids' Crossword

By Reston crossword constructor, Joe O'Neill

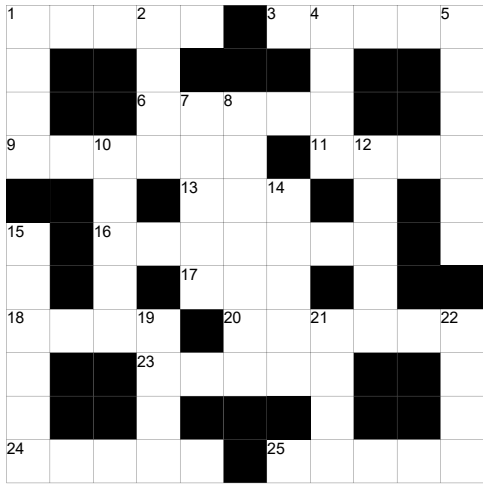
DOWN

- 1. Rain drop sound
- 2. "Awesome!"
- 4. Opposite of more
- 5. Pinocchio or Miss Piggy
- 7. Bite playfully, as puppies do (2 words)
- 8. They circle around the sun
- 10. Country Mt. Everest sits in (other than China)
- 12. Unsuccessful competitor

- 14. Adjusts a guitar's pitch ... or what whistlers whistle
- 15. Make yourself heard ... or "chime in" (2 words)
- 19. Warning sign to some, like a comet or black cat
- 21. Assistant
- 22. Dads ... or balloon explosions

ACROSS

- 1. What you should not put your clothes in on the floor
- 3. Soft and round, like some berries or cheeks
- 6. How some some dress for bed (2 words)
- 9. You may use one to solve this puzzle
- 11. Pig food
- 13. A "good doggy" might get one on its back
- 16. Baseball stadium snacks (in shells)
- 17. Point value of Z in Scrabble
- 18. Game played on horses
- 20. Rip apart ... or cry (2 words)



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- 23. All-time soccer great Lionel \_\_\_\_\_
- 24. Animal shelter ... or British currency
- 25. Sneaks a quick look

Mindful communication: talking and listening with kindness

By Victoria Stacy, Kids Section Co-Editor

Have you ever had a moment when you felt upset, and someone said just the right thing to help you feel better? Or maybe a friend really listened to you when you needed to talk. That's the power of mindful communication. It means paying close attention to how we speak and listen—so we can understand each other and build strong, caring friendships.

Mindful communication starts with listening. When a friend is talking, try to stop what you're doing and focus on their words. Look at them, stay quiet, and really try to understand what they're saying. You can show you're listening by nodding or saying things like “I

understand” or “That sounds hard.” When we listen with care, people feel respected and heard.

Talking mindfully is just as important. That means thinking before we speak and choosing words that are kind and helpful. If you're upset, instead of yelling or blaming, try using calm words to explain how you feel. You might say, “I felt sad when I wasn't included,” instead of “You were mean to me!” When we share our feelings in a peaceful way, others are more likely to listen and help make things better.

Sometimes, it helps to take a deep breath before speaking—especially if you're feeling strong emotions like anger or frustration. This short pause gives your brain time to calm down so you can say what you really mean, without

hurting someone's feelings. That's being mindful.

Another part of mindful communication is noticing how others might be feeling. If a friend is quiet or looks upset, you can check in with kind words like, “Do you want to talk?” or “Are you okay?” Paying attention to other people's feelings helps you be a more thoughtful and caring friend.

Misunderstandings happen to everyone, but using mindful communication helps fix them. When both people speak honestly and listen carefully, they can solve problems without fighting. It helps friendships stay strong, even during tough moments.

So the next time you're talking with a friend, take a moment to slow down,

listen with your heart, and speak with kindness. Mindful communication doesn't just help you get along better—it helps everyone feel safe, respected, and connected.

Being mindful with your words and listening ears is a skill you can use every day. It's a simple way to make your classroom, playground, and world a more caring place.





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

Good news about fat, protein, and staying strong naturally

I’m here today to share something that will make a lot of people happy: it turns out our fat cells may actually help us live longer. Recent findings show that having a bit of extra energy stored—yes, a few extra pounds—can act as a buffer and contribute to longevity. Of course, where that fat is stored matters. Fat concentrated around the waist is still a risk factor, but overall, some reserve is beneficial. A DXA scan remains a great way to learn how your body fat is distributed.

This Wednesday, Pericles will be teaching a class on protein, challenging the widespread belief—often shared by trainers—that you need massive amounts of protein to build muscle. I can personally vouch that gym time and sleep, not protein shakes, are what really shape those arms. He’ll also explain the concept of protein turnover, which I found fascinating: if you don’t use it, you lose it.

When you stop working out for a few weeks, your body begins reallocating amino acids to where they’re more urgently needed. Think of it like reusing Lego blocks—taking pieces from an old Star Wars ship to build a new Lego farm. Our bodies are always building, breaking down, and rebuilding.

Bones follow a similar process. Osteoclasts break down old bone tissue, while osteoblasts create new bone. But if we’re not placing stress on our bones—through walking, strength training, or even jumping rope—this vital maintenance slows down. Bone-building medications can stimulate growth, but they don’t remove the old, weak structures underneath, which can lead to serious fractures, especially in the hip, if a fall occurs.

A natural approach remains best. A diet rich in

beans and greens, regular weight-bearing exercise to stimulate healing, and adequate sleep for repair and rebuilding will keep us fit as nature intended—no pills or powders required.

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



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Ask Doctor S.

Sleeping for success

Getting a good night’s sleep is one of the best ways to feel energized, focused and less stressed, and helping your children establish nighttime routines is an important way to prepare for a successful school year. Sleep habits are among the conversations I have regularly with clients of all ages. Before I evaluate and diagnose someone with a mental health condition, I try to determine how sleep, or lack thereof, may be contributing to their symptoms.

According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine, Vol. 12, No. 6, 2016), sleeping the recommended number of hours is associated with better health in a number of areas, including behavior, attention, learning and memory—all of which are critical in school (and in life!). Their recommendations are as follows:

- Infants 4 months to 12 months should sleep 12 to 16 hours per 24 hours (including naps).
- Children 1 to 2 years of age should sleep 11 to 14 hours per 24 hours (including naps).
- Children 3 to 5 years of age should sleep 10 to 13 hours per 24 hours (including naps).
- Children 6 to 12 years of age should sleep 9 to 12 hours per 24 hours.
- Teenagers 13 to 18 years of age should sleep 8 to 10 hours per 24 hours on a regular basis.

In addition, the Cleveland Clinic (<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/happens-body-dont-get-enough-sleep>) includes recommendations for adults:

- Young adults (18 to 25 years): 7 to 9 hours.

- Adults, 26 to 64 years: 7 to 9 hours.
- Adults, 65+ years: 7 to 8 hours.

Getting enough sleep is not something to do once in a while, as it is important every night. Not getting enough sleep has many short- and long-term consequences, such as fatigue, irritability, forgetfulness, mood changes and other mental health challenges, as well as increased risk for physical problems, such as higher cortisol levels, weight gain, a weakened immune system, cardiovascular disease, and cognitive decline. As an aside, if you or your children struggle with chronic insomnia, snoring, or other sleep difficulties, please consult with a sleep physician to determine if you have sleep apnea or another condition.

So, how can we improve our children’s (and our own) sleep habits before school begins? It really only takes about one week to do so. Start by establishing an evening routine that includes “wind-down” activities, such as setting aside screens a couple of hours before bedtime. Your children may insist that they “need” a phone at their bedsides for the alarm, but please purchase an actual alarm clock and teach your child how to use it. A warm shower a few hours before bed can benefit sleep and overall health. Preparing a cozy sleep environment by setting up warm blankets and stuffies, turning down the thermostat and limiting noise also let your body know it is time for rest. Quiet activities like reading, journaling, gentle stretching, avoiding heavy foods or big meals, listening to soothing music and/or

guided meditations (for very young kids, try the Sesame Street App; for school aged children, try Smiling Mind; and for older children, try Calm or Insight Timer, to name a few), are additional ways to nurture our brains and bodies before sleep. Encourage your children to go to bed and wake up 15 to 20 minutes earlier each day until it aligns with a school schedule. Yes, even on the weekends.

Wishing parents, teachers, school administrators and staff, and students a great start to the school year!

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](http://www.oakhillpsychological.com). Please visit the About Us section on our website to learn more about our team of therapists!*

Restonian

Counting what matters in Reston

Somehow, we missed the annual Reston Butterfly Count this summer. But thanks to a helpful Reston Association press release, we learned that while volunteers spotted plenty of different species, overall numbers were down. Sightings ranged from the European Cabbage White (which also happens to be a DRB-approved trim color) to the Huron Sachem Skipper (that abandoned floating dock), and the Common Wood Nymph (think closing time at one of RTC’s many fine watering holes).

But we digress. Why should we only count the bugs flitting through our plastic-fantastic planned community? They don’t even pay HOA dues! Here are some other things we, as Right-Thinking Restonians, might consider keeping tabs on:

- The number of times the police helicopter circles

over Reston. Airborne like the butterflies, but with a distinct soupçon of suburban suspicion.

- The number of Facebook and Nextdoor posts about the police helicopter circling over Reston. Grab some extra scratch paper for this one.
- The number of vowels in apartment and business names. BLVD, VY, SWTHZ, the late-lamented BGR (RIP)—you could count them on one hand.
- The number of fish swimming on the jumbotron at Wiehle Metro. Great for keeping the kids occupied while you try to remember if you parked on level G95 or G96.
- The average indoor temperature in homes with Reston’s jet-age lake-cooled AC system. Bonus points for breaking triple digits!

- The number of green dots signifying open parking spaces in RTC garages. For extra fun, subtract the actual number of open spaces and order that many breadsticks at your favorite chain restaurant.
- The number of 90-degree angles in the new buildings rising near Wiehle Metro. You won’t need a lot of paper for this one.
- The number of walls meeting at 90-degree angles inside Reston’s 50-year-old homes. Another low number. Things improve with age—but don’t necessarily get more plumb.
- The number of golf balls sliced into the woods around Reston’s golf courses. If some folks have their way, that number may soon drop faster than the butterfly count.



LIFESTYLE

Inside Art

By Louise Seirmarco-Yale,  
Reston Artist



Robert E. Simon envisioned a community where one could work, live, and play. Surprisingly, many of us live and work well here in Reston without taking full advantage of the playful opportunities offered by its beautiful lakes. And water offers more than just sport; it's visually and emotionally enriching.

Gazing at a lake's surface can evoke a wide range of emotions, some universal, some deeply personal. Water reflects both the outer world and the viewer's inner state. It mirrors how we feel.

Poets have long understood this. Still water is a common image in Japanese haiku, symbolizing presence, awareness, and simplicity. One of the most famous haiku emphasizes how silence gives a moment its meaning: "A pond, the frog jumps in, splash of water."— Matsuo Bashō (1694)

Art, too, offers moments like this. We are drawn to it most when it touches our emotions. Like water, art can change us, connecting us to inner feelings we may need to express, acknowledge, repress—or simply enjoy. How wonderful that Mr. Simon included lakes in Reston's design. Lakes are a gift to the imagination. Often, they show the world inverted—clouds floating below, the sky in the water. Dreamlike. Magical.

The stillness of a lake can slow time and quiet the mind. A slight breeze stirring ripples across the surface adds movement and fascination. We love to look at water.

Painting water has long been considered a mark of mastery in art. Monet famously said he was not painting lilies, but "the light on the water." Painting water requires unusual skill, as it is essentially invisible. Artists rely on reflections, movement, and surrounding colors—a glass, a shore, a lily pad, a boat—to reveal it. John Singer Sargent, for example, beautifully captured the shimmer of Venetian light on water.

J.M.W. Turner used romantic, and dramatic light and color to express the atmosphere of turbulent seas, misty harbors, and stormy waves. Winslow Homer's realistic seascapes portrayed his deep knowledge of waves, spray, and danger. Hokusai's famous woodblock print, "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" is notable for the stylized, yet emotionally intense treatment of waves. Water becomes a character in a deeply touching narrative.

Take a walk around a lake soon. Different times of day yield different reflections, colors, and moods. Watching water at night, glancing down from a boat, or dropping in a fishing line are all great art experiences. There is nothing as powerful as water to touch true emotions within us. Except perhaps art.

Louise Seirmarco-Yale is a Reston artist, speaker, teacher and author of "Art. You Be The Judge. Reawaken your Instincts and Enjoy Art On Your Own Terms." It is available on Amazon. Learn more at [www.peopleneedart.com](http://www.peopleneedart.com), or email her at: [hello@peopleneedart.com](mailto:hello@peopleneedart.com) FB and Instagram: [louise\\_seirmarco\\_art](https://www.instagram.com/louise_seirmarco_art)

Peru-sing the menu at Pisco y Nazca Ceviche Gastrobar

By Phantom Foodie

This month, we head back to Reston Town Center for bold summer flavors and ceviche at Pisco y Nazca. Tucked into Explorer Street, this Peruvian gastrobar delivers a lively atmosphere and inventive cuisine that's equal parts stylish and satisfying. The restaurant's name nods to the Peruvian saying "Entre Pisco y Nazca," which refers to enjoying drinks in good company—so in that spirit, I brought a few friends along.

The open kitchen and vibrant bar welcomed us with a spicy Latin vibe. We opted for the daily happy hour menu, which let us sample a range of smaller portions on a more flexible budget. The bartenders were friendly and knowledgeable, explaining each drink and menu option in detail.

The delicious Chicha Margarita was slightly sweet with a sugar rim and a cherry hue thanks to its corn-based chicha morada. The wine list leaned upscale, though there were fewer choices by the glass. The red and white sangrias looked tempting, but we did not imbibe. Dishes arrived quickly and all at once. First up, the Ceviche Callejero, a seafood medley with cancha (fried corn kernels) and plantain chips. Spicy with a smooth finish, it took top honors among the small plates. Other highlights included the chicken stew croquetas, empanadas,

and the unexpected Lomo Saltado Roll—wok-seared tenderloin layered with soy and oyster sauce, aioli, queso fresco, and panko, all rolled sushi-style.

Also a hit: the Chausa de Carne, a fusion of Chinese and Peruvian flavors. This dish of wok-fried jasmine rice with beef tenderloin, vegetables, and savory seasoning was shared and devoured within minutes.

The only disappointment was the tuna tartare tacos. While the tuna was tasty, it was overwhelmed by the crispy wonton shell.

For dessert lovers, don't miss the Alfajores—delicate, traditional cookies filled with rich dulce de leche. Delightfully delectable.

If the August heat has you beat, consider an escape to Pisco y Nazca for cool cocktails, vibrant energy, and clean Latin flavors that channel the spirit of Lima—no passport required.

Kids plates and family meals available. Private dining, Catering, Online Ordering.

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The Reston Letter and its staff do not receive solicitation, compensation, or special endorsement from any restaurant or culinary establishment. Our reviewer dines unannounced to make the experience genuine. Our mission is to provide



Photos by Phantom Foodie

our readers with an accurate representation of our reviewer's experience so they may make their own informed decisions. Taste, service, and culinary preferences vary.

Mindshift™ brings playful movement and community connection to Reston

By Holly Weatherwax, Staff Writer



Photo by Benjamin Burgess

Reston has a new gym, and it's out to shift how you think about fitness—starting with the mind-body connection.

Mindshift Gym™, located at 11501 Sunset Hills Road (just past Plaza America from Reston Parkway), celebrated its grand opening with a ribbon cutting hosted by the Reston Chamber on July 17.

Owner and founder Bill Wotowiec previously operated the gym as Urban Evolution in Alexandria. With the move to Reston came a rebrand that better reflects its core philosophy: "We don't stop playing because we get old—we get old because we stop playing!" That guiding principle, often attributed to George Bernard Shaw,

infuses every offering at Mindshift.

And those offerings are anything but ordinary.

Always wanted to try Parkour? Curious about Aerial Silks or Lyra (aerial hoop)? Hoping to finally master a backflip or a handstand? How about custom training for hula hooping? Mindshift™ makes all this accessible, with expert instructors and an inclusive, non-intimidating atmosphere. There are drop-in passes for the curious and series packages for the committed. Even yoga and dance classes are tailored for beginners and regulars alike.

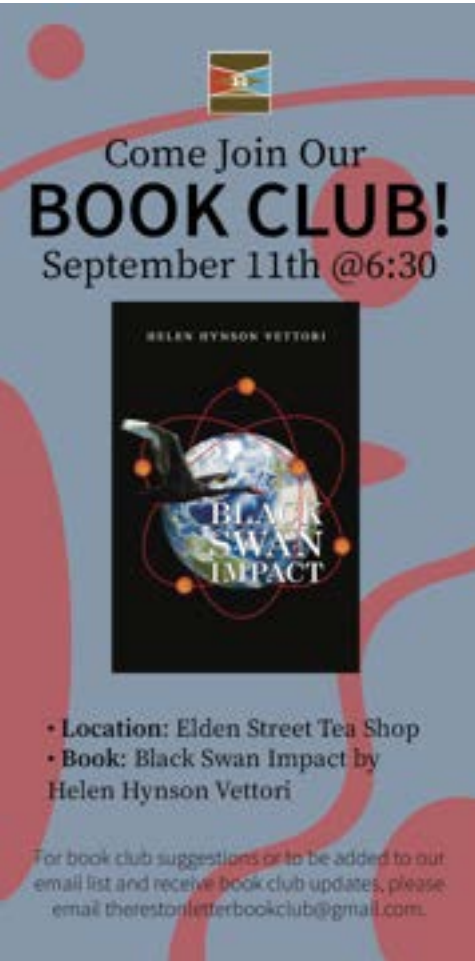
Beyond fitness, Mindshift is deeply rooted in the community. Kids' birthday parties, camps, and scout events keep the gym buzzing. Corporate groups can book custom team-building workshops, guided by Bill, a Certified Executive Leadership Coach.

And then there's Flash the Firetruck—a real fire engine converted to carry six aerial silks for offsite instruction. Flash shows up at schools, birthdays, and community events, complete with climb-ins and mobile parkour setups.

Mindshift also partners with senior centers to promote strength, movement, and stability for older adults, reinforcing the gym's mission: helping people of all ages build confidence through physical accomplishment.

Want to design a group experience, sponsor a class, or ask about training? Reach out at [info@mindshiftgym.com](mailto:info@mindshiftgym.com) or 855-646-5271.

Special "Welcome to Reston" pricing is now available. Learn more at [www.mindshiftgym.com](http://www.mindshiftgym.com).





# Help document Reston's wildlife during the 2025 Bioblitz

Photo by Ana Ka (Capital Nature)

Be part of something wild—and help Reston better understand and protect its biodiversity.

# How to get the most bang for your buck in your home remodel

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