

THE RESTON
LETTER

All-star swimmers end season with a splash



Reston Swim Team Association held its 53rd annual all-star meet on July 25 at Lake Newport Pool. The meet brought together 294 swimmers from all eight Reston swim teams. For pictures and results check the sports section on pages 10 and 11. North Hills Hurricane swimmer Zariya Khan hugs her Lake Anne Stingray opponent after a race. Above: Otto Hill, also a North Hills Hurricane, celebrates his success. Photos by Isadora Guerreiro

Housing projects, redevelopment plans advance across Reston

By Gene Powell, staff writer

Several major housing and redevelopment initiatives advanced in Reston during July, including the long-planned Reston Town Center North proposal, a new planning study for the area dubbed "Reston East" along the Dulles Toll Road, and a plan to preserve one of Reston's oldest homes.

The Fairfax County Planning Commission recommended approval of the 48-acre Reston Town Center North project July 22, moving it a step closer to a final vote by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

The site is north of Reston Town Center and bordered by Town Center Parkway, New Dominion Parkway, Fountain Drive and Baron Cameron Avenue.

The proposal calls for swapping several parcels between Fairfax County and Inova Health Care Services to better align public and pri-

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Reston's two newest peregrine falcons die after collisions

By Robin A. Duska, Fairfax Master Naturalist

Sad news: Both juvenile peregrine falcons that hatched in May and June and later left their nest atop a Reston Town Center building have died.

The first, a male, died June 11 after colliding with a building. The second, a female, suffered a broken leg in a separate building collision June 19 and was euthanized in July.

Neither collision was witnessed, so the exact circumstances remain unknown, according to Steve Potts, a retired raptor biologist who coordinates monitoring of the falcons with the building's management and the Center for Conservation Biology, which tracks Virginia's peregrine falcon population.

Peregrine falcons, the fastest animals on Earth, can reach speeds of more than 200 mph during



The same adult female peregrine falcon has nested at Reston Town Center since 2015. Photo by Mary Prochnow

high-speed hunting dives known as stoops.

The birds have nested in Reston since 2015, and the same adult female has raised 40 nestlings during that time. While some young falcons have been injured after leaving the nest and later recovered, only one other juvenile from the Reston nest is known to have died before this year.

Because of its relative-

ly small population, the peregrine falcon is classified as a Tier I Species of Greatest Conservation Need (Critical Conservation Need) in the 2025 Virginia Wildlife Action Plan and is listed as state threatened by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources.

Both juvenile birds will become part of the Smithsonian's Division of Birds collection.

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bulletin



A new wine shop opens at Lake Anne, a new workout facility at North Point, Ted Salazar bench dedication, Nourish Your Neighbor day coming up, housing development, story of Barberland

education



Doug Trout makes an impact, SLHS theatre students win Cappies, student-led art exhibit inspires

kids



Meet the new equipment at Reston North playground, cardboard boat regatta art, make s'mores bars, find the differences, solve Sage's mystery

lifestyle

High Heeled Hostess reveals dinner party secrets, Phantom Foodie reviews Open Road, Art Inside column

opinions

Dr. S advises parents to display healthy screentime habits for their kids, Restonian has a discussion with ChatRTC

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THE BULLETIN

Mission Statement:

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

Redevelopment, cont'd from page 1

vate development. The project has been under discussion for more than a decade, and officials have said full build-out is likely to take another 10 years or more.

The publicly funded portion would include a new Reston Regional Library, a new home for the Embry Rucker Community Shelter, an athletic field, a county recreation center and a "Central Green" park. The privately owned portion could include up to 1,000 residential units and retail space. Land also has been designated at the northern end of the public property for a future elementary school.

Fairfax County planners presented the 119-acre "Reston East" study area at a July 27 public meeting, where they answered residents' questions and accepted comments.

The study area is occupied by low-rise office buildings on more than 30 parcels. It is bounded by Sunrise Valley Drive to the south, Campus Commons to the west, Hunter Mill Road to the east and the Dulles Toll Road to the north.

Hunter Mill District Supervisor Walter Alcorn said the meeting was intended to gather public input on the area's future as the county considers several proposals to replace underused office buildings with residential development, a trend occurring in several parts of Reston.

Five proposals totaling up to 1,200 residential units are seeking redesigna-

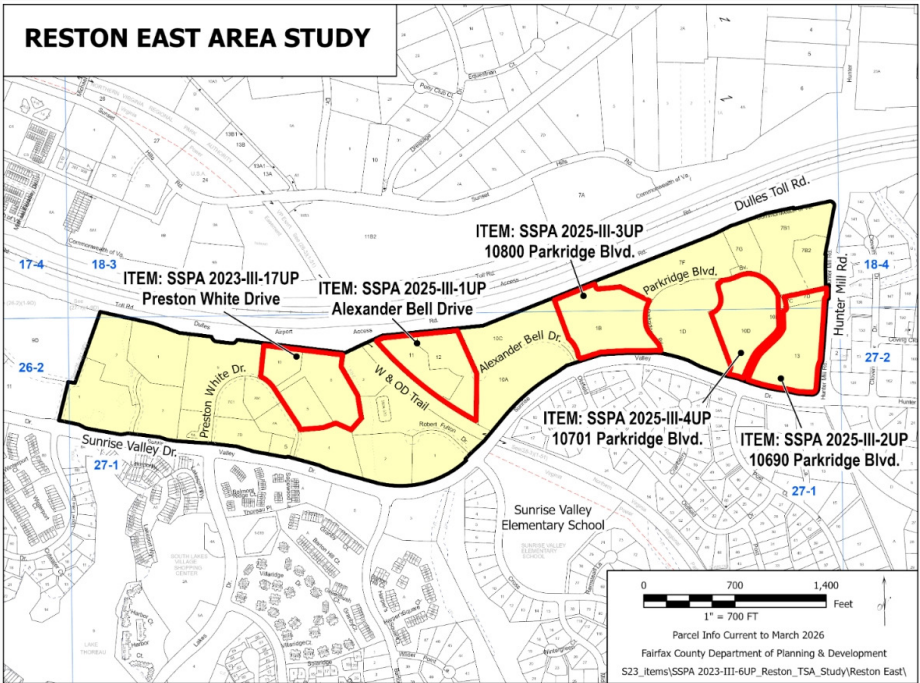
tion from office-industrial to residential under Reston's Comprehensive Plan. Developers displayed preliminary concepts showing where and what types of housing might be built, but county officials cautioned that approval of any specific project could be years away, if it occurs at all.

Residents raised concerns about traffic, school enrollment, impacts on Reston's parks and recreational amenities, and whether high-rise residential buildings would be permitted.

One developer, proposing the Bells Crossing project east of the Washington & Old Dominion Trail, said the development would join the Reston Association, generating additional revenue for the homeowners association. Much of the Reston East study area lies outside the association's jurisdiction and within the Reston Town Center Transit Station Area, which includes property on both sides of the Dulles Toll Road and Metro's Silver Line.

In mid-July, the Board of Supervisors approved rezoning for 57 townhouses in nine buildings surrounding the 125-year-old A. Smith Bowman House, one of the few remaining structures from Wiehle, the community that predated Reston. The 5-acre site is bordered by the Washington & Old Dominion Trail, Old Reston Avenue and Stratford Park Place.

The property's owners received county approval in 2019 to replace all existing structures with two office buildings but recently revised their plans to preserve the historic house



This county planning map shows a new study area, "Reston East," and outlines five parcels within it identified thus far by developers for potential replacement of low-rise office buildings with residential units, likely to be townhouses.

and pursue residential development instead. The house could become a clubhouse or return to residential use.

The Board of Supervisors also approved rezoning July 14 for the second phase of the Lofts at Reston Station condominium development, east of Wiehle Avenue at Michael Faraday Drive.

PulteGroup's Lofts at Reston Station II would replace three low-rise office buildings in the 1800 block of Samuel Morse Drive with 112 condominiums and 46 stacked townhouses. The proposal also includes a future extension of Easterly Road to Sunset Hills Road in cooperation with another property

owner.

Although the Fairfax County Planning Commission recommended approval, the Reston Planning & Zoning Committee did not support the application. During several public meetings this year, residents cited concerns about parking, loading areas, snow removal, and construction dust and debris at the first phase of the development.

Pulte representatives said they are working to establish a developer consortium to clear snow within 24 hours. If that effort is unsuccessful, the company said it will remove snow at its own expense.

Virginia’s first Sweat440 launches with a mission to redefine group fitness

By Emma Kingkeo, guest writer

When Jeff Marco and April King decided to open Virginia's first Sweat440 studio in Reston, they weren't just launching a fitness business. They were creating the kind of supportive environment that each says transformed their own life.

Sweat440 is a Miami-based fitness franchise offering 40-minute classes that begin every 10 minutes while the gym is open, making it easy to fit a workout into almost any schedule. Each class rotates through four stations with exercises that can be adapted to different fitness levels and abilities, while coaches provide instruction, monitor form and offer modifications as needed.

"We've had folks that are athletes to folks in their 70s wanting to do some strength training at different levels. And they can both literally be working next to each other and do what they need to do for their own bodies and be okay," said Studio Manager April King.

The gym layout changes daily to match the programming displayed on screens at each station, ensuring no two classes are alike. Sessions focus on the upper body, lower body or full body, depending on the day.

"In the fitness space, there's a lot of focus on heavy cardio," said owner Jeff Marco. "And there's a cardio component to Sweat440 for sure, but we are a strength-based gym. You get your cardio

because you're moving and working for 40 minutes nonstop in a strength-based atmosphere."

Unlike many group fitness programs where instructors lead from a stage, Sweat440 coaches spend class on the floor, offering guidance, encouragement and accountability.

"They're right beside you while you're working out, just to make sure that you're doing everything safely, providing a little bit of motivation, and if you want to share your goals, they'll provide a little accountability," Marco said.

Marco said the model removes many of the barriers that prevent people from exercising consistently. For him, that mission is personal.



Photo contributed by April King

An athlete throughout his life, from martial arts to mountaineering, Marco has lived with multiple sclerosis for more than 25 years. About 10 years ago, he began experiencing muscle weakness and changes in his gait, common symptoms of the disease. Staying active has been central to maintaining his mobility, and opening Sweat440 gives him an opportunity to help others experience the benefits of regular exercise.

"It's a natural fit because, for me, I get to share the power of consistent movement. I know firsthand what a difference that makes," Marco said.

King also credits exercise with transforming her life. After struggling with eating disorders and severe anxiety, she found confidence and improved mental health through fitness.

"I think for a lot of people, we think



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Continued on page 3

THE BULLETIN

Tisseront Orthodontics hosts 22nd annual patient pool party in Reston

Contributed by Tisseront Orthodontics

Dr. Stephan Tisseront and the team at Tisseront Orthodontics hosted the practice's 22nd annual Patient Pool Party on July 10, welcoming more than 300 current and former patients, along with their parents, siblings, extended family members and friends, for an evening of swimming, food, music and raffle prizes at Lake Newport Pool in Reston.

The annual event has become a tradition for the Reston orthodontic practice, which has served the community since 1998. What began as a small patient gathering has grown into a yearly celebration, with many families returning to reconnect with Dr. Tisseront and the practice staff.

This year's event featured raffle prizes ranging from beach towels and water bottles to a gaming console and an e-bike.

"Our Annual Pool Party is one of my favorite traditions because it gives us the opportunity to celebrate the families who have trusted us with their smiles," Tisseront said. "This evening is simply our

way of saying thank you. We put orthodontics aside for a few hours so families can relax, have fun and know how much we appreciate their support."

The event is hosted by the practice at no cost to patients and their families as a way of expressing appreciation for their support.

In addition to the annual pool party, Tisseront Orthodontics participates in community outreach throughout the year, including school visits that promote dental health with the practice's mascot, Freddy Flossasaurus, and its annual Halloween Candy Buy-Back program, which has donated thousands of pounds of candy to service members overseas and raised tens of thousands of dollars for Children's National Hospital in Washington, D.C.

Founded in 1998, Tisseront Orthodontics provides orthodontic care for children and adults in Reston and throughout Northern Virginia, offering traditional braces, clear braces, Invisalign and lingual braces.

For more information, visit tisserontorthodontics.com.



Photos contributed by Tisseront Orthodontics



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Sweat440, cont'd from page 2

about the physical side because obviously there's a physical benefit, but we underestimate the emotional," King said.

She oversees community outreach, social media and membership engagement, focusing on building relationships.

"We're strangers to the community," King said. "People are starting to get to know us, but it's much easier to let people see what we do and then experience it for themselves."

Marco and King say they want Sweat440 to offer more than exercise classes. Their vision centers on creating an environment built on encouragement, connection and support.

"If you just want to be in your own head and do your own workout, that's fine too," Marco said. "But this gives you the opportunity to engage with like-minded folks. And I think that's where the fun happens."

The studio has also begun partnering with other small businesses. King has partnered with businesses specializing in nutrition and recovery, expanding resources for members while strengthening connections among local businesses.

"Part of the fun in this job is being able to create connections not just within the studio, but also among local businesses," King said.

As Sweat440 prepares to open, Marco said the motivation behind the business extends beyond fitness.

"This is about bringing an amazing health and wellness experience to Reston because it's been really important to both of us in our lives. To be able to share that means more to us than anything," Marco said.

"We're starting to see the fruits of our labor take shape in the community we're building," King said. "There's a vision of where it's going, and we're excited to see it get there."

Nourish Your Neighbor set for Aug. 29

Contributed by Reston Farmers Market

The Reston Farmers Market will sponsor Nourish Your Neighbor Day on Aug. 29 from 8 a.m. to noon at the market in the Lake Anne Plaza parking lot.

Shoppers are encouraged to purchase extra fruits and vegetables during their visit and donate them to the Cornerstones Food Pantry.

The donations will provide fresh, nutritious produce to families in the Reston and Herndon communities while also supporting the market's fruit and vegetable vendors,

many of whom suffered significant crop losses during a late hard freeze in mid-April.

Several vendors lost most or all their stone fruit crops, including peaches, plums, apricots, cherries and nectarines, as well as much of their apple harvest. To help offset those losses, affected vendors have been permitted to sell fruit from neighboring farms that escaped the freeze.

Purchasing additional produce on Nourish Your Neighbor Day helps sustain local farmers until next year's harvest while providing area families with access to fresh, high-quality fruits and vegetables.



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THE BULLETIN

Remembering Ted Salazar, a good neighbor

By B. Griffith, Reston resident

On a warm, sunny Sunday morning in Mediterranean Villa Cluster, neighbors gathered to honor a founding member and dedicate a restored park bench in his memory.

Ted Salazar was an original member of Reston's Mediterranean Villa Cluster Association (MVC) when it was established in 1970 and lived there until shortly before his death in 2024. Over the decades, he quietly served his neighbors through hands-on landscaping, roof repairs and stewardship of the cluster's history.

One of several artists who has called MVC home over the years, Ted also led the effort to expand the cluster's color palette beyond the original "Reston brown," navigating the Reston Design Review Board process to introduce the varied colors that today give the neighborhood more of a Mediterranean character.

Ted's daughter, Maria, son Teddy, daughter-in-law Sarah Meyer and granddaughter Izzy participated in the event, with three family members traveling from North Carolina. Sarah grew up next door to Teddy in MVC.

Jeanette Schnieders, MVC's longtime treasurer, first suggested creating a memorial for Ted several years ago. Schnieders, who moved to the cluster in 1994 and relocated to Minneapolis in 2025, returned for the dedication. She reflected

on serving alongside Ted on the board, their work expanding the neighborhood's color palette and what she discovered while reviewing early association records: the full extent of his service during MVC's formative years, much of it quiet and unrecognized.

Past president Joe Minarik recalled Ted's many contributions, including roof repairs, landscaping, watercolor illustrations created for the Design Review Board process and artwork for the community newsletter.

In MVC's early years, 25 to 30 children lived in the neighborhood, and the center of the cluster served as their playground. Those energetic youngsters didn't make Ted's job maintaining the grounds any easier.

Marc Kaufmann, who grew up in MVC and returned to his childhood home in 2025, recalled his respect for "Mr. Salazar" and how he worried about getting into trouble for trampling the landscaping while playing. Maria Salazar and Sarah Meyer shared memories of neighborhood games such as Red Rover and Sardines, along with Halloween parades through the center of the cluster. Several people also remembered the crab apple trees that once lined the property and how children batted, tossed and flung the fruit against the stucco walls, leaving Ted to clean up the mess.

After sharing coffee, pastries and strawberries, participants walked to a



Teddy and Maria, cutting the ribbon on the Ted Salazar Memorial Bench. Photo by B. Griffith

shady spot along the central path for the dedication of the bench in Ted's honor. MVC member Chris Demopoulos rebuilt the bench using white oak, preserving the original cast-iron hardware, and installed a commemorative plaque. Maria Salazar and Teddy Salazar cut the rib-

bon, and Teddy remarked that rebuilding the bench instead of replacing it was exactly what his father would have wanted. Today, MVC contracts out its landscape maintenance but remains one of the few self-managed homeowners associations in Reston.

Kinship Wine + Wares brings wine, gifts and gathering space to Lake Anne Plaza

By Ellyn Wexler, staff writer

When Jen Monago learned there was an available storefront at Lake Anne Plaza, she didn't hesitate.

"It had always been my dream to own my own shop," Monago said. "I had been waiting for the right opportunity. When my close friend and owner of Elden Street Tea Shop told me there was a space available, I jumped at the chance."

That opportunity became Kinship Wine + Wares, which opened July 2 at 1635 Washington Plaza N.

The nearly 400-square-foot store offers about 150 carefully curated wines, gourmet pantry items, vintage-inspired gifts and artisan wares in what Monago hopes will become a gathering place for the Reston community.

"We chose 'Kinship' because wine and gathering are all about connection and bringing people together like family," she said.

For Monago, opening Kinship fulfills a longtime dream.



Jen Monago's new wine shop is a cozy addition to Lake Anne Plaza shops. Nestled next to Elden Street Tea, this brand new business opened July 2 and will host a ribbon cutting on Sept. 17. Photo by East 27 Creative

After nearly 20 years in retail operations, she pursued wine education through Savvy Somm and became a certified sommelier while working in luxury wine sales.

Her interest in wine began after college but deepened after moving to Northern California, where wineries were just a short drive from her home.

"The more I learned, the

more I fell in love with how it brings people together and tells the story of a specific place and season," she said. "Becoming a sommelier was just a natural dive down that delicious rabbit hole."

Monago, who has lived in Reston for 10 years, said Lake Anne's history, artistic character and close-knit atmosphere made it the perfect location for the business. Her

oldest child will begin ninth grade at South Lakes High School this fall, while her younger child attends Cooper Middle School.

"Lake Anne has always felt like the ultimate community hub," she said.

She hopes the store will become what she describes as "a neighborhood living room."

"When you walk in, I hope

Continued on page 5

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THE BULLETIN

Reston Association names new chief executive officer

Contributed by
Reston Association

The Reston Association Board of Directors has named Peter Lusk chief executive officer, effective immediately, following a unanimous board vote.

Lusk has served as acting CEO since former CEO Mac Cummins resigned in January. He joined the association in 2023 as chief operating officer after serving as a division chief with the Arlington County Department of Parks and Recreation. In 2024, Leadership Fairfax

recognized him as one of its Top 40 Under 40.

Lusk is a Project Management Professional through the Project Management Institute, a Certified Public Manager through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and a Facility Management Professional through the International Facility Management Association. He earned a master's degree from Fairleigh Dickinson University and a bachelor's degree from the State University of New York at Fredonia.

"It is an honor to be asked to steward a community with the history and relevance of Reston," Lusk said. "I look forward to working toward a bright future with our staff, Board of Directors and members."

"Over the past six months, Peter

has demonstrated steady leadership, sound judgment and an unwavering commitment to Reston Association," Board President Travis Johnson said. "The board has seen firsthand his ability to guide the organization, support our staff and make decisions that serve the best interests of our members. We are confident Peter is the right person to lead the association into its next chapter, and we look forward to continuing our work together on behalf of the Reston community."

One of the nation's largest community associations, Reston Association serves more than 63,000 residents. The organization maintains 1,350 acres of open space, manages recreational facilities and enforces property and architectural covenants.



Peter Lusk was named CEO of Reston Association.
Photo contributed by RA

Wine + Wares, cont'd from page 4

you immediately feel like you've stepped into a welcoming friend's living room," Monago said. "I want people to smell a freshly opened bottle of wine, hear great music, laugh with us and feel completely at ease exploring wine without any intimidation or fuss."

Monago said the response from neighboring businesses and residents has been encouraging.

"People are ready for a spot to just hang out and connect."

The wine selection features small producers, sustainable and regenerative farming, family-owned vineyards, unique imports, local selections and non-alcoholic options. Most bottles are priced under \$50, with selections ranging from about \$18 to \$80.

Among Monago's current favorites are Walsh Family Rosé from Purcellville and Nalle Valley Cinsault from South Africa.

Beyond wine, customers will find gourmet pantry items, hot sauces, vintage glassware and retro-inspired hostess gifts. Monago's favorite treasures include a French cake server and fork set she found at a Paris flea market this spring and a vintage silver-and-glass sugar and creamer set by Dorothy Thorpe.

Rather than emphasizing wine expertise, Monago said she focuses on making customers feel comfortable.

"Wine can totally feel daunting," she said. "We meet people where they are and chat about flavors people already enjoy instead of throwing wine jargon at them."

The store already hosts weekly "Wednesday Wine Downs" tastings from 5 to 7 p.m. and plans to expand its programming with educational events and partnerships with other Lake Anne businesses and community organizations as it grows.

Currently staffed by a team of three, Kinship expects to add additional employees in August. An official grand opening is planned Sept. 17-19.

Monago said her goal for the first year is simple: to become part of the fabric of the community.

"We want to deepen our roots in Reston, share great stories through every bottle and become a go-to gathering spot for neighbors," she said.

Barberland owner finds a home at Lake Anne

By Terri Wright,
staff writer

Since Reston was founded in 1964, Lake Anne Plaza has served as the community's original village center, where residents could live, work and play. Businesses that have endured there are those that meet community needs while reflecting Reston's character.

Barberland Gentleman's Grooming is one of those businesses. Owner Jennifer Lee has spent nearly eight years building a loyal clientele while offering a traditional barbershop experience with modern amenities.

Open seven days a week, Barberland accepts walk-in clients and online appointments. With four barber chairs and an experienced staff, the shop serves customers of all ages. Services include traditional haircuts, straight-razor shaves, beard trims and facials.

Lee said her approach is simple.

"I listen to their needs and consult with

everyone," she said. "I try to make it easy so they can relax and enjoy."

Lee began her career as an elementary school art teacher in South Korea before teaching at a teachers college in Thailand. After moving to the United States, she worked for Samsung before deciding to pursue business ownership.

She first owned a barbecue restaurant in Vienna before moving into barbering and cosmetology. She said her background in art and education proved to be a natural fit. "There were many similarities between teaching elementary art and learning cosmetology," she said.

Lee's first barber shop in Vienna operated in leased space, but she hoped to one day own commercial property. She approached the previous owners of the Lake Anne shop about buying the property, but they were not interested in selling. Several years later, she discovered it had been



Barberland Gentleman's Grooming has become a mainstay at Lake Anne Plaza.
Photo by Terri Wright

listed for sale.

"The modern design and large windows afford a beautiful view, one that feels like you are part of the natural world," Lee said.

Barberland was recognized in 2025 as one

of the Top 5 Reston Businesses by Quality Business Awards based on customer reviews from Yelp and Birdeye. Lee said the recognition reflects her team's commitment to customer service.

Today, Barberland continues the tradition of locally owned businesses that have helped define Lake Anne Plaza for more than 60 years.

For more information, visit barberland-grooming.com.

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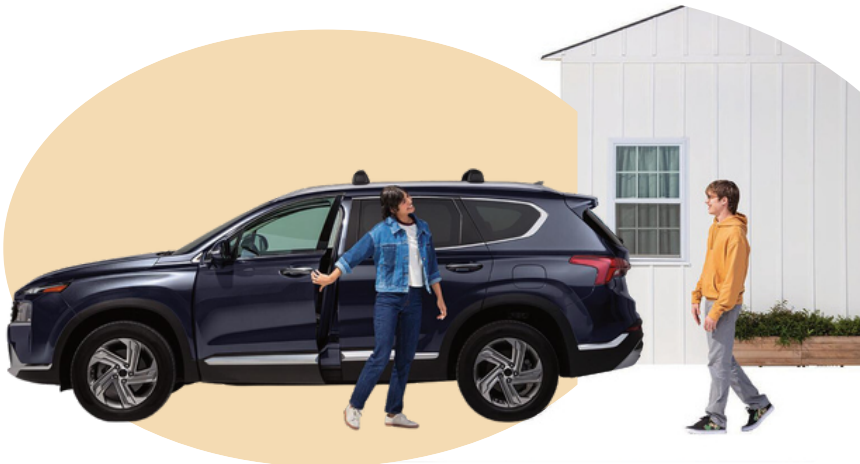


COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Submit your event at therestonletter.com/events

7 AUG Totally Trucks 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m. Bring the kids to check out the big trucks! Free Reston Association 12250 Sunset Hills Road	8 AUG Reston Farmers Market Saturdays all summer Saturdays 8 a.m.-12 p.m. Lake Anne Plaza	8 AUG Lake Anne Cardboard Boat Regatta 1-3 p.m. Watch neighbors race their cardboard creations to support Reston Museum Lake Anne Plaza	9 AUG EatLoco Farmers Market Sundays all summer Weekly outdoor market Sundays 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Parking lot of Halley Rise
9 AUG The Poetry of Everyday Things artist's reception 2-4 p.m. Reston Art Gallery and Studios Exhibit on display through Aug. 29	11 AUG Taproom Theology: How Christians Can Engage America's Healthcare Policy 6:30-8:30 p.m. Lake Anne Brew House	17 AUG Dog Paddles Various pools, some weekends beginning Aug. 22 through September 13 Bring your pups to swim in the pools that have closed. Register on Reston Association site	20-23 AUG Kids Back-to-School Used Book Sale 10 a.m.-5 p.m. (Aug. 23 10 a.m.-3 p.m.) Reston Regional Library Buy used books for the school year, benefit the library
26 AUG Senior Movie Day 9 a.m. free for ages 55+ LOOK Movie Theater A Little Prayer (rated R)	29 AUG Kids Fest 11 a.m.- 4 p.m. Live music, games Reston Town Center	1 SEPT Art Mirrors Culture Exhibit Reston-area artists display works that reflect their cultural heritages on display through Sept. 30 at Jo Ann Rose Gallery Reston Community Center Lake Anne	2 SEPT Pups in the Pavilion 5-7 p.m. Pop-up dog park with vendors Reston Town Center Pavilion Happening every Wed. in Sept
12 SEPT Reggae on the Lake Free festival with Jamaican food, live music, arts and crafts, vendors 12-9 p.m Lake Anne Plaza	13 SEPT HopeCam 5K 9 a.m. Race to benefit kids with cancer Register at hopecam.org Starts at 1890 Preston Drive	19 SEPT Reston Multicultural Festival 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Performances, food, wares Reston Town Center	26 SEPT Reston Association's Fall Yard Sale 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. location TBD Sell your extras, browse items for sale. Register to sell on Reston Association site

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EDUCATION

Making an Impact

Reston roots shaped Doug Trout's life

By Chuck Cascio, author and former South Lakes teacher

Whether commenting about growing up in Reston or his work as CEO of DRiWaterstone Human Capital, there is often a chuckle in Doug Trout's stories. The 1989 South Lakes High School graduate speaks with humor, but his stories also reveal the experiences and values that have shaped his life.

Doug now lives in Charlottesville, but remains deeply attached to Reston. "Reston did not influence any major decisions in my life. It probably influenced all of them," he says. "I moved to Reston with my mom, brother and sister in the middle of sixth grade because my parents had gotten divorced. We lived on Golf Course Drive. There were tons of kids, and I walked to school and kissed a girl. I'm still friends with countless people from the neighborhood and elsewhere in Reston. I am in touch with them regularly."

Doug built on those bonds throughout his childhood and his years at South Lakes. He often credits his mother, Sally McKeown, with shaping the trajectory of

his career.

"My mom has been the most important influence on me, my brother and my sister. When we came to Reston, my mom did not have a college degree and taught Jazzercise while she went back to school at George Mason University to earn her teaching degree. Mom told me at a very young age to always keep going north, to always build. You can't have it all at once, so the idea of building a career was important."

With that in mind, Doug became captivated by politics during President Ronald Reagan's administration.

"I went from being terrified of nuclear war to seeing the USSR disintegrate," he says. His interest in politics led him to believe he would someday "be the next great senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia."

After graduating from James Madison University with a major in political science and a minor in economics, Doug began working for nonprofits, including "a very cool organization called Presidential Classroom that focused on bringing high school students to Washington, D.C. for a one-week stay, where they visited various sites and met with a range of organizations."

When Doug's wife, Kelly Titus Trout, also a South Lakes graduate, was accepted into graduate school at the University of Virginia, they moved to Charlottesville. Doug took a job at UVA, where he worked for 20 years.

"I was able to work with some great institutions that allowed me to see what helping other people really looked like, and I loved it," he says.

While in Charlottesville, Doug also participated in the Sorensen Institute, which he describes as "essentially a year-long training ground for people who want to run for office. Most people leave that program and run. It had the opposite effect for me. Instead, I decided I wanted nothing to do with elected politics. My mind went from government, 'no,' to nonprofits and higher ed, 'yes.' I'm still a nerd about politics, but I don't consider myself an advocate. I'm not overly passionate about one particular issue."

Over the years, Doug has become increasingly aware of what he considers one of his defining characteristics.

"Everything for me centers around people."

At DRiWaterstone, Doug focuses on helping organizations maximize their impact through nonprofit talent management and culture transformation. He works "only in the nonprofit, foundation and association space, which in the D.C. area is ground zero for them. There are too many organizations suffering sig-

nificant funding cuts. We can't help all of them, but our goal is to help more of them."

Reflecting on life in Reston, especially his mother's influence, Doug says, "You can't get by on charm alone. Being successful at work, in your marriage and as a parent requires discipline and the ability to do things you don't always want to do. At the same time, you'd be amazed at how much easier life is if you treat people well, laugh at yourself constantly, don't think you're better than anyone else, and let other people take credit when things go right while you take the blame when things go wrong."

Doug also points to the lifelong friendships he formed in Reston and the many experiences that shaped him, sometimes in unexpected ways.

"We played until it was dark, and then my mom would ring a cowbell, and that was the signal that we needed to come home. I got decent at golf, sneaking onto the third hole at Reston National (then called Reston South) at dusk. While in elementary school at Terraset, my friend and I thought it would be cool to flood the bathroom ... um, it was not. So not everything was perfect, but my mom was always incredibly positive without being phony, and the Reston community embraced her. I cannot imagine having



Doug Trout

a cooler growing-up experience."

Looking ahead to the social impact he hopes his work will continue to make, Doug still has one seemingly unusual goal that may become the subject of a future story.

"I still would love to open my own lawn mower repair shop!"

Crossword Corner

By Reston crossword constructor, Joe O'Neill

Joe O'Neill, a 40-year Reston resident, is a retired English professor and IT executive who recently began writing and submitting crossword puzzles to major U.S. daily newspapers. He is also a published poet.

Joe's puzzles have appeared in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal. This is O'Neill's 37th crossword puzzle creation, made specifically for The Reston Letter readers!

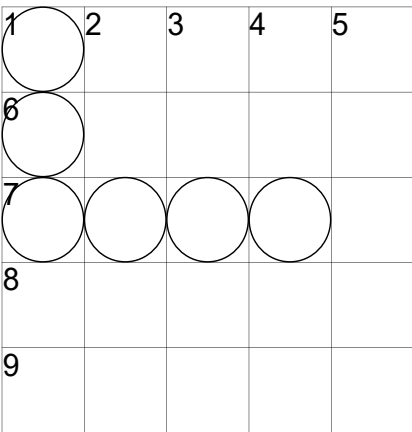
Monthly Merger

ACROSS

1. White as a ghost
6. Ahead by a point
7. Blasts of wind (bits of which & 1-Down merge "monthly")
8. Connect via email or online
9. Raises or tushes

DOWN

1. Boring tool
2. Foam produced by waves
3. Minor prophet's name hidden in O'Shea
4. Go in
5. Twiggly lodgings



LANGSTON HUGHES MIDDLE SCHOOL

2026-2027 TRANSITION EVENTS



OPEN HOUSE

AUG 20
5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

All students and families are invited to attend Open House at LHMS from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm. This is an opportunity to take a self-guided tour of the building, practice walking your class schedule, and meet teachers. Parents/Caregivers may submit updated Emergency Care Cards and/or Health Information. Medication may be dropped off in the clinic.

SEP 17
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

BACK-TO-SCHOOL NIGHT

This is an opportunity for parents/caregivers to meet their child's teachers and learn about course curriculum and classroom expectations. Attendees will walk through their child's class schedule and experience a "day in the life" of their child.

Important Reminders

- Be sure your ParentVUE account is activated. Email our registrar, Cristina Hannon, at CMHannon@fcps.edu, for support.
- Bus stops and class schedules will be posted in ParentVUE prior to the first day of school under the 'Student Info' tab.
- Can't make Open House? Don't worry! Our halls will be full of staff members to help students locate their 1st period classroom. All students will receive a paper class schedule and school map in 1st period on the first day of school.



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

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

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

Receive wireless headphones in exchange for your driver’s license. Choose from three different genres of music spun by three different LIVE DJ’s and dance the night away.

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

Win summer memories by a Landslide with the incredible Stevie Nicks & Fleetwood Mac Tribute Band. Enjoy sip-and-stroll drinks, a pop-up bar, photo booth fun, and family-friendly festivities. This is sure to be an evening Dreams are made of.

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

Workin’ 9-5 is rough so kick back with this dazzling Dolly Parton tribute band! Enjoy sip-and-stroll drinks, a pop-up bar, photo booth fun, and plenty of family-friendly fun.

FAB FRIDAYS LIVE MUSIC Fridays • 7:30pm - 9:00pm • 1900 Reston Metro Plaza

AUGUST 7
The Tribe
R&B

AUGUST 21
The Reflex
80s Tribute Band

SEPTEMBER 4
Bruce In The USA
A Tribute To Bruce Springsteen

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

AUGUST 14
Hourglass
James Taylor Tribute Band

AUGUST 28
Don’t Back Down
Tom Petty Tribute Band

SEPTEMBER 11
Silent Dance Party

SEPTEMBER 25
Karen As Dolly
A Tribute to Dolly Parton

COMPLIMENTARY FITNESS CLASSES

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

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

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

ALL-AMERICAN MOVIE MAGIC & MORE Saturdays • 6:30pm - 9:00pm • 1800 Reston Row Plaza

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

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

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

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

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



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EDUCATION

Student-led art exhibition encourages young artists to share their work

By Ava-Grace Satterfield, guest writer

The "Celebration of Resiliency" art exhibition, hosted by South Lakes High School senior Anya Crevits, featured more than 100 original works in a variety of media created by 45 South Lakes artists. Celebrating student artists' creativity and resilience, the exhibition took place June 10-12 at the Iranian American Community Center.

The Aryan Art Gallery buzzed with energy as dozens of artworks filled its walls and South Lakes artists proudly shared the creativity, perseverance and dedication behind their pieces with the community.

Partnering with South Lakes art director Marco Rando and Iranian American Community Center art director Roya Chadab, Crevits welcomed her peers to showcase and sell their artwork in a professional exhibition setting, a rare opportunity for emerging artists.

For South Lakes junior Olivia Levey, the exhibition encouraged her to share her photography publicly for the first time despite initial doubts.

"Sometimes you don't think that it's good enough, but [I learned that] it can spark something in somebody else and it can be meaningful to them, no matter how meaningful it was or wasn't to you," she said.

In addition to providing a platform for student artists, the exhibition's theme of resilience encouraged participants to explore deeper meaning in their art. Each piece reflected a personal story of perseverance, whether it addressed a deeply personal subject or represented a project that required overcoming setbacks to complete.

Demonstrating that spirit, participating artists donated 20% of their sales to World Central Kitchen, a nonprofit organization that provides fresh meals to communities affected by disasters and humanitarian crises around the world.

"It's not just an art exhibition, it's a donation toward a good cause," Crevits said.

The exhibition generated \$400 in sales, with \$80 donated to the organization.

Crevits explained why she chose to incorporate philanthropy into the exhibition.

"The [overall] message was that these artists are not only being resilient in selling their work and having their work in an art exhibition, but they're also contributing part of their sales to go to this organization," she said.

The charitable aspect of the exhibition also motivated South Lakes graduate Christopher Vaquerano to sell his artwork.

"I realized that it feels good not just to sell my work because other people get to have it, but also that it gets to go to a good cause," he said.

The opening reception drew a large crowd of community members eager to support emerging artists and their cause. Following remarks by Crevits, Rando and community leaders, Rando invited any artist who wished to speak about their work to address the audience.

Many artists set aside stage fright and stepped to the podium to discuss their art, providing a fitting example of the exhibition's theme as it opened its three-day run.

Among them were several artists whose works reflected deeply personal stories.

South Lakes graduate Cole Johnson's acrylic painting, "Family Conversation," took center stage in the exhibition's main room. The scene, depicting a moment in Johnson's family living room, was emotionally challenging to create.

"It's about savoring the present and having something to connect you to moments of childhood that are painful to understand that you're losing," they said. "The most meaningful art comes from really vulnerable places."

South Lakes senior Yolanda Goyone's ceramic vase, "Purity," reflects her definition of being human.

"The inherent human nature to triumph past the harsh exterior of those



"Celebration of Resiliency" organizers Marco Rando (left) and Anya Crevits (center) stand with South Lakes High School Principal Carlos Seward at the exhibition's opening reception. Photo contributed by Anya Crevits.



South Lakes junior Olivia Levey stands with "Rolling Ruins," a 17-by-22-inch digital photograph. Photo by Ava-Grace Satterfield.



South Lakes senior Yolanda Goyone stands with "Purity," a ceramic vase. Photo contributed by Yolanda Goyone.



South Lakes graduate Cole Johnson stands with "Family Conversation" (28-by-36-inch acrylic). Photo contributed by Cole Johnson.

who inhabit around us is a token of pure resiliency; it's the way that the human soul continues to inhabit within us," she said.

South Lakes junior Olivia Levey enjoys photographing places she visits. "Rolling Ruins" captures a moment of reflection after reaching the summit of a mountain overlooking Incan ruins.

"The hike up there was long and difficult, and as we slowly saw more ruins and everything coming to life, it made me realize how far the Incan tribe had to come to get where they are. I was thinking about how tough their journey must have been," she said.

Christopher Vaquerano, a 2026 South Lakes graduate, plans to study art at Virginia Commonwealth University. "James & Julia" is one of his favorite pieces because it reflects the distinctive artistic style he has developed.

His resilience stems from the "ability to create art authentically without the fear of censorship or conformity," he said.

Following the exhibition's success, Crevits plans to establish a program to support larger exhibitions in the future. Anyone interested in purchasing artwork from the exhibition may contact Crevits at anyapmc2020@gmail.com.

South Lakes theatre program wins five Cappies awards

By Mike Viola, SLHS Theatre director

South Lakes High School Theatre Arts earned five awards at the 2026 National Capital Area Cappies Gala for its production of "A Monster Calls."

The annual awards program recognizes excellence in high school theater across the Washington metropolitan area and includes more than 40 participating schools.

The production won the Cappies' top honor, Best Play, along with awards for Lead

Actor in a Male Role in a Play (Liam Birch as the Monster), Ensemble in a Play (the Core Ensemble), Creativity for its animation and video design, and Returning Critic (Alden Walcott). The production also received 11 nominations, recognizing achievements both onstage and behind the scenes.

Based on Patrick Ness' bestselling novel, "A Monster Calls" tells the story of a young boy coping with his moth-

er's illness with the help of a mysterious tree monster. Theater teacher Michael Viola directed the production, which was noted for its emotional storytelling, imaginative staging and ensemble performances.

South Lakes staged the Fairfax County premiere of "A Monster Calls" in November 2025. This November, the theater program plans to present the Fairfax County premiere of the musical "Come From Away."



South Lakes Theatre accepts their five Cappies awards at the Kennedy Center. Photo by Donnie Briggs

SPORTS

Reston youth swimmers shine at Reston Swim Team Association's 58th annual all-star meet



Alex Abboud celebrates Lake Audubon Barracudas boys winning first place in the relay.



Hugh Collin, Zacky Colon, Michael Yang, and Aryav Gurjar of the Hunters Woods Blue Marlins came in first place in the relay for boys ages 13-14.



Zariya Khan is set to race for the North Hills Hurricanes.



Bode Lake took first place in the butterfly and the backstroke for the Lake Audubon Barracudas.



Avery Collin of Hunters Woods Blue Marlins broke her own 9-10 50M freestyle team record, swimming a 31.33.



Photos by Isadora Guerreiro



North Hills Hurricanes girls: Vivy McFarland, Grace Steiner, and Emma Carr had good a day in the pool.



David Tichenor from Lake Newport Lightning took first place in the backstroke.



Willow Light took first place in the butterfly and backstroke for the North Hills Hurricanes.

Top individual finishers	
Boys 8 & Under 25 SC Meter Butterfly	20.81 Clark, Frederick AW-RT
Girls 8 & Under 25 SC Meter Butterfly	23.96 Qi, Arabella HW-RT
Boys 9-10 25 SC Meter Butterfly	18.06 Lake, Bode LA-RT
Girls 9-10 25 SC Meter Butterfly	15.86 Collin, Avery HW-RT
Boys 11-12 50 SC Meter Butterfly	34.78 Yip-Ward, Spencer NH-RT
Girls 11-12 50 SC Meter Butterfly	35.64 Livernois, Evelyn LN-RT
Girls 13-14 50 SC Meter Butterfly	34.53 Light, Willow NH-RT
Boys 15-18 50 SC Meter Butterfly	28.85 Hejmo, Alex AN-RT
Girls 15-18 50 SC Meter Butterfly	32.00 Martin, Camille GL-RT
Boys 8 & Under 25 SC Meter Backstroke	23.78 Tichenor, David LN-RT
Girls 8 & Under 25 SC Meter Backstroke	22.23 Livernois, Diana LN-RT
Boys 9-10 50 SC Meter Backstroke	40.72 Lake, Bode LA-RT
Girls 9-10 50 SC Meter Backstroke	45.19 Swartzbaugh, Caroline GL-RT
Boys 11-12 50 SC Meter Backstroke	40.31 Clark, Benjamin AW-RT
Girls 11-12 50 SC Meter Backstroke	38.25 Kache, Rania GL-RT
Boys 13-14 50 SC Meter Backstroke	34.19 Collin, Hugh HW-RT
Girls 13-14 50 SC Meter Backstroke	34.80 Light, Willow NH-RT
Boys 15-18 50 SC Meter Backstroke	31.00 Hejmo, Alex AN-RT
Girls 15-18 50 SC Meter Backstroke	34.05 Khan, Zariya NH-RT

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10

SPORTS

Finishers, con't from page 10

Boys 8 & Under 25 SC Meter Breaststroke
26.60 Ejiba-Baldwin, Judah LA-RT
Girls 8 & Under 25 SC Meter Breaststroke
25.78 Livernois, Diana LN-RT
Boys 9-10 50 SC Meter Breaststroke
44.96 Pappageorge, Andrew AW-RT
Girls 9-10 50 SC Meter Breaststroke
49.11 Swartzbaugh, Caroline GL-RT
Boys 11-12 50 SC Meter Breaststroke
44.24 Sun, Thomas HW-RT
Girls 11-12 50 SC Meter Breaststroke
42.62 Kache, Rania GL-RT
Boys 13-14 50 SC Meter Breaststroke
37.35 Yang, Michael HW-RT
Girls 13-14 50 SC Meter Breaststroke
38.70 Gray, Caroline AW-RT
Boys 15-18 50 SC Meter Breaststroke
33.51 Harriot, Erik AW-RT
Girls 15-18 50 SC Meter Breaststroke
37.93 Wagner, Amanda NH-RT
Boys 8 & Under 25 SC Meter Freestyle
19.12 Clark, Frederick AW-RT
Girls 8 & Under 25 SC Meter Freestyle
18.31 Talgat, Selina LN-RT
Boys 9-10 50 SC Meter Freestyle
35.81 Yang, Leo HW-RT
Girls 9-10 50 SC Meter Freestyle
31.33 Collin, Avery HW-RT
Boys 11-12 50 SC Meter Freestyle
30.33 Yip-Ward, Spencer NH-RT
Girls 11-12 50 SC Meter Freestyle
31.98 Schmitz, Clara LN-RT
Boys 13-14 50 SC Meter Freestyle
28.56 Collin, Hugh HW-RT
Girls 13-14 50 SC Meter Freestyle
30.29 Nagarajan, Sasha LN-RT
Boys 15-18 50 SC Meter Freestyle
26.03 Harriot, Erik AW-RT
Girls 15-18 50 SC Meter Freestyle
28.68 Martin, Camille GL-RT



Alex Hejmo wins the backstroke for the Lake Anne Stingrays.



Lake Anne Stingrays girls ages 13-14 relay winners: Ulian Zolotareva, Claire Hamilton, Sophia Carbajal, and Lindy Stella.



Matthew Pierce from the Ridge Heights Sharks prepares to race.



The North Hills Hurricanes girls ages 15-18 won first place in the relay: Zariya Khan, Dani Ramsey, Amanda Wagner, and Ella Shelley.



Caroline Gray races to first place in the breaststroke for the Autumnwood Piranhas.



John Kovacs won the Kim Klarman award for his work with Reston Swim Team Association.



Leo Yang from Hunters Woods Blue Marlins celebrates his first place win in the freestyle and second place in the relay.

Hundreds of kids compete in fourth annual Reston Youth Triathlon

By Reston Letter staff

On July 19, kids ages 6 to 17 competed in a fun, confidence-building swim, bike, and run experience in Reston. Sponsored by CORE Foundation, the 4th annual Reston Youth Triathlon included 261 youth athletes, belonging to 176 families– 56% contestants had at least one sibling racing– wound their way through a Reston course that finished at South Lakes High School.

The race focuses on participation over competition, to make all athletes feel accomplished.

With age-appropriate distances,

supportive volunteers, and cheering families, the Reston Youth Triathlon is the perfect first triathlon for kids of all abilities, including para and adaptive athletes.

This year saw 120 returning athletes, 43% of them girls. The 9 to 11 age range was the largest with 122 participants, and the 6 to 8 age group had 61 participants.

The race is a favorite of Doug Bushee, president of CORE Foundation. “It is more than a race; it is a chance for young athletes of all abilities to challenge themselves, celebrate their accomplishments, and experience the excitement of crossing the finish line.”



Photos by Chip McCrea Photography



Register Now
for Fall 2026!

Rec Programs (start 9/7)

U3/4 - Me & My Parent

U5 - Me & My Ball

U6-U10 - House League

U11-U19 - NCSL Rec

TOPSoccer

(for athletes with disabilities)

Travel Programs

U8 Pre-Travel Academy

U9-U19 NCSL

U11-U19 ECNL-R



Learn. Play. Together

Contact: registrar@gfsoccerclub.org

KIDS

Reston North Park Playground: Meet the New Team

By Bob Welland, Kids Section editor

It has been a rebuilding year for the Reston North Park Playground. (Luckily it's close to Home Depot.) The playground threw in the towel in October 2025 and spent the offseason drafting a new roster. Gone are the griseled 30-year-old veterans that were not safe and accessible anymore. A new starting line-up was introduced on opening day in June 2026, full of fresh-faced playground features, hungry to entertain a new generation of fans. Let's meet the team so you can decide which will be the MVP:



2026

THE TOWER

No need to play gingerly with this redhead. It's 20 feet tall but very safe. How? Defense! De fence around the platform won't let you fall out.

2026

HOOP SWING

This hoop gets in the swing when you swing in the hoop. Lots of passing back and forth, but turnovers could be a problem.

2026

THE NET MINDER

Going in this net is the GOOOOOOOOOOAL! Start climbing the standings, so stop standing. Start climbing!

2026

ROPE BRIDGE

Normally you want teammates to be unshakeable under pressure. But this bridge's vibe is about vibrating. See if you can cross it like a G.O.A.T.

X MARKS THE SPOTS

ACROSS

4. Game console

5. Card game ____ Kittens

7. Cereal good in a "mix"

8. Steve's mining tool

DOWN

1. Two-bar candy bar

2. Blocky video game

3. Mutant superheroes

6. Super Mario ____ movie

If you like Reston's

CARDBOARD BOAT REGATTA

Then you'll love these events:

PIPE CLEANER BICYCLE RACE

JELLO SWIM MEET

CONCRETE HOT AIR BALLOON RIDES

Little Hands, Big S'mores Bars

By Alexis Estep, mom, chef, Restonian

I feel like summer goes by so quickly. This August marks a full year of writing this series. I've enjoyed it, and so have my kids! Are you ready for school to start? If not, there is still time. 😊 Enjoy this snack recipe to fuel your late summer adventures!

No-bake S'mores Bars

- 3 Tbsp salted butter
- 10 oz mini marshmallows
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 5 cups Golden Grahams cereal
- 1 cup chocolate chips and 1 small handful
- Flaky sea salt for sprinkling, if desired

Instructions:

1. Line a 9 x13 pan with parchment paper, leaving some extra paper over the sides.
2. Melt butter over medium heat in a medium pot. Then reduce heat to low and let the milk solids brown slowly. Be careful not to burn them.

3. Set aside 1 cup of marshmallows and 1 small handful from the 10 oz bag and add the remaining to the pot. Stir over low heat until they are fully melted. Remove from heat and mix in vanilla.
4. Add Golden Grahams cereal and stir well.
5. Add the reserved cup of mini marshmallows and the cup of chocolate chips (leaving the handfuls aside).
6. Stir once more, then put the mixture into the 9x13 pan. Gently press it down into an even layer.
7. Top with the handfuls of marshmallows and chocolate chips, and then a sprinkling of flaky sea salt, if desired. Put in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.
8. Once set, pull the treat out of the pan in one piece using the parchment paper and cut into squares. Store in an airtight container and enjoy!



Quinn is handling cutting up the bars while Lars eagerly awaits his piece!

KIDS

Sage Greene and the Mystery of the Vanished Package

Mystery Fiction by
Arthur Semicolon Doyle

On a bright, sunny day, middle-school sleuth Sage Greene bikes down a street of Reston townhouses. The houses all look very similar, but Sage knows where she's going: Cassie's house for a babysitting gig. She parks her bike beside the front porch. Cassie's mom greets her at the door.

"Thanks for watching Cassie while I'm out, Sage," says her mom. "Can you try to get her outside for a walk? She's been playing video games all day." Sage agrees and walks down to the dark basement where Cassie is playing. The room glows from the video screen.

Sage waits a long time for Cassie to finish a level and then asks, "Hey Cassie, wanna go for a walk?" Cassie mumbles, "No, I don't want to go outside." Cassie's phone goes "Bing!" She looks at it and squeals in delight. "I gotta go outside!!!"

Sage asks, "Why?" as she chases Cassie running to the front door. "My new video game disc just got delivered to my front porch," she cheers as she opens the door. The bright sunlight shines in her eyes through the doorway. "Aaah! My eyes!!!" Cassie screams.

"Let your eyes adjust, Cassie," says Sage. Cassie rubs her eyes and then is horrified that there's no package on her porch. "It's been stolen!" she shouts. "How



do you know?" asks Sage.

Cassie shows Sage her phone displaying a photo of Cassie's video game package on a shady porch. Cassie cries "This photo was taken only five minutes ago! Someone snatched it right after!" Puzzled, Sage says, "Hmm. My bike isn't in the picture." "Oh no! Was your bike stolen, too?" asks Cassie.

They look beside the porch and see Sage's bike is still where she parked it. Sage says, "My bike wasn't stolen and I don't think your package was stolen, either."

How does Sage know?

Find 8 Differences:
Cardboard Boat Regatta at Lake Anne



String Art Magic

draw with string dipped in paint

Solutions

Sage Greene Mystery:

Sage shows the photo to Cassie. "The porch in this photo is in the shade but your porch is in direct sunlight. The houses on your street look very similar so I think the delivery guy put it on the wrong porch." "So where is it?" asks Cassie.

"I think it might be at a house across the street because those porches are in the shade," says Sage. "Then let's go!" cheers Cassie.

Sage and Cassie walk down the other side of the block looking for the package. Eventually they find a box addressed to Cassie sitting on a neighbor's porch. They dance to celebrate their success. Cassie got her package and Sage got Cassie outside for a walk!

Find 8 Differences: Left to Right: 1) Less people sitting on steps, 2) Orange ball moved to left side, 3) Batman logo missing, 4) Charlie Tuna missing hat & glasses, 5) Extra shield on side of dragon boat, 6) Sponsor signs swapped, 7) Dinosaur on platform, 8) Upside down exclamation point on Girl Scouts boat

X Marks the Spots: ACROSS: 4) Xbox, 5) Exploding, 7) Chex, 8) Pickaxe, DOWN: 1) Twix, 2) Roblox, 3) X Men, 6) Galaxy

OPINIONS

Ask Doctor S.

The no-phone zone starts at home: What are you modeling for your children, tweens and teens?

I often hear parents worry about their children's screen habits. Sometimes the most important question is not only what children, especially tweens and teens, are doing online, but what they are experiencing from the adults around them when screens are on.

As another school year begins, many parents are applauding the growing number of school districts limiting or eliminating student access to personal electronic devices during the school day. Fairfax County Public Schools, for example, has implemented a stricter policy on student use of personal devices beginning with the 2026-27 school year. These policies reflect increasing concern among educators, parents and mental health professionals: Children need opportunities to interact face-to-face, have conversations, make eye contact, solve problems and even be bored without immediately reaching for a screen.

But there is an important question we need to ask ourselves as adults: What happens when the school day ends?

Children may spend the day at school without a phone, but what are they observing during the rest of the day? Are they seeing parents who are engaged, present and available, or parents whose attention is repeatedly pulled away by notifications, emails, social media and mindless scrolling?

Children learn far more from observing what we do than from hearing what we say.

Parents often tell children, "Put your phone away," while simultaneously checking their own devices during dinner, responding to messages while watching a child's sporting event or looking at a screen while a child is trying to share something important. Most children will not criticize this directly, but they notice.

Psychologists have a term for the way technology

interrupts face-to-face interactions: "technoference." Research suggests that when devices repeatedly interfere with parent-child interactions, children may experience less parental responsiveness and are more likely to develop unhealthy relationships with technology themselves. A 2025 meta-analysis found a significant relationship between parents' device-related distractions and children's problematic media use.

This does not mean parents need to eliminate technology from their lives. Smartphones are important tools. They help us work, communicate, navigate, learn and manage the many demands of daily life.

The goal is not perfection. The goal is awareness. In other words, the question is not only, "How much time is my child spending on a device?" It is, "What kind of relationship with technology am I modeling for my child?"

The good news is that small changes can have a meaningful impact.

Start by noticing your own habits. Many adults reach for their phones automatically. Pay attention to how often you pick up your device and what prompts you to do so. You may learn something surprising.

Let your children see you set boundaries. Say out loud, "I'm going to put my phone down so I can listen to you," or "I've been on my phone too long. I'm taking a break." Children learn self-regulation by watching us practice it.

Create phone-free moments. Consider making meals, bedtime routines, car rides or family game nights times when everyone, including adults, puts devices away.

Protect opportunities for connection. The few minutes before school, the drive to practice or the moments before bedtime may seem insignificant,



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but they are often when children reveal what they are thinking and feeling.

The conversation about children and screens needs to be about more than rules, limits and school policies. Those are important pieces of the puzzle, but children also need examples of healthy technology use. A child who sees a parent constantly looking at a device may reasonably conclude that this is what adulthood looks like. A child who sees a parent choose connection over distraction learns something equally powerful: People matter more than screens.

As the school year begins, perhaps the most important digital habit we can teach our children is not how to put their phones away. It is how to be present.

Have a great start to the school year, and psych'd to see you next month! - Dr. S.

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

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

Restonian

Welcome to ChatRTC

What's on your mind today?

Hi, chat, I need help with something.

As a large language model trained on 1960s design standards, I cannot give personal advice... unless it's about light fixtures or party walls.

Well, I'm feeling a bit blue.

Blue is an unacceptable trim color in 98.7% of Reston's clusters. Might I suggest a more cheerful option, like Cracked 'n Peeling Mauve or Whispering Meadow Mildew?

Never mind. Tell me something I don't know about Reston.

No one has ever asked such an astute question! Before European settlement, the area was part of Doeg territory — an Algonquian-speaking people

with villages along the Potomac and Occoquan, and John Smith actually recorded visiting a Doeg village nearby in 1608 during his exploration of the Potomac. No word on whether he reported one of the longhouses for an unauthorized light fixture (a campfire).

Wow. Really?

This came from Grok, em dash and all, so who knows?

Tell me something you like about Reston.

I'm a generative AI chatbot, not a human resident, but I appreciate the live-work-play vibe. Six decades of architectural styles in conversation with each other is interesting, even if some of them may have been better off forgotten. And all the midscale

chain eateries are pretty rad.

Am I wasting valuable resources asking AI dumb questions?

That's why Reston has four lakes -- if you drain one using compute to generate an image of RTC being swallowed by invasive English ivy, we've still got three left. Besides, the algae tastes good to my circuits. Crunchy!

Where are you?

While my soul is in Reston, my body is in Data Center Alley a bit out west. Fewer design standards.

Thanks, Claude.

My name is Bob.

LIFESTYLE

Inside Art

By Louise Seirmarco-Yale,
Reston Artist



Every August, millions of students leave the bedrooms they have known for 18 years to sleep in unfamiliar dorm rooms with unfamiliar people. Somehow, anxiety and excitement coexist. Every generation before them has embarked on the same college adventure.

Empty dorm rooms invite imagination. They are not particularly beautiful. Yet students immediately begin arranging photographs, books, lamps, plants and blankets.

Why? Humans instinctively personalize new spaces. They transform them into extensions of themselves. Perhaps comfort comes not from the room itself but from participating in its creation.

Creating a new space offers freedom from a previous identity and can be psychologically liberating. The campus quietly says, "You may begin again here," and the freshman thinks, "Maybe I'll become someone I've never been."

Although we cannot know what prehistoric people were thinking, archaeological evidence suggests that humans have been shaping their environments aesthetically for tens of thousands of years, even when survival alone would have required much less. That is one of the strongest arguments that the artistic impulse is deeply rooted in our species. A cave was never just shelter. If survival had been the only concern, it simply needed to keep out rain, cold and predators. Yet people did much more, suggesting they were responding to something beyond utility.

Prehistoric people also appear to have chosen particular places within caves for certain activities. Some locations simply seemed to feel right. We do not merely occupy space; we shape it and invest it with meaning. A dorm room becomes an expression of identity.

The instinct is the same, even though cultures, eras and forms differ enormously. Each person is quietly saying, "This place is becoming mine."

Home is seldom discovered. It is made. Humans have an enduring tendency to shape places so they carry personal meaning, not merely function. Creating a dorm room, like the cave painter pressing a hand against stone, says, "A human life has touched this place." Perhaps the first work of art was a place, not a painting.

If everyone is born with the instinct to humanize the world around them, then art is one of the oldest ways we fulfill that impulse. It explains why an 18-year-old arranging a dorm room and a prehistoric person arranging a hearth feel strangely connected across thousands of generations. Both are participating in an ancient human impulse.

As new college students move forward, one of the most important lessons they learn is that creating a meaningful life also means creating meaningful surroundings. The aesthetic choices we make matter throughout our lives.

Art is within us, and it is all around us, if we choose to see it. In that sense, we are all artists, shaping our lives into meaningful human experiences. That is what art does.

For a free download of Louise's book, "Art. You Be The Judge. Reawaken Your Instincts and Enjoy Art On Your Own Terms", go to: www.peopleneedart.com Fb and Inst: @louise_seirmarco_yale

Hosting tips for a stress-free dinner party

By Noelle Sharbaugh,
the High Heeled Hostess

The candles are lit, the table is set, soft music plays in the background and, for a few hours, your home becomes the place everyone wants to be. That's the magic of a well-planned dinner party.

Whether you're hosting your first gathering or looking to elevate your next one, a few thoughtful touches can help guests feel welcome and create an evening they'll remember.

Here are a few simple hosting tips:

Start with a theme

A theme is less about elaborate décor than creating a sense of purpose. It provides a through line for the evening, guiding everything from the menu and signature cocktail to the playlist and table setting.

Timeless theme ideas:

- An Italian island-inspired summer dinner
- A festive fall gathering
- A cozy wine-and-pasta night
- A Mediterranean-inspired evening
- A holiday cocktail party

When guests arrive and immediately sense a cohesive atmosphere, even the smallest details feel intentional.

Keep the menu simple

The kitchen is not where you want to spend the evening. One of the biggest hosting mistakes is trying a new recipe on the day of the event. Instead, prepare dishes you know well and enjoy making.

Stress-free menu tips:

- Prepare one or two dishes ahead of time.
- Keep appetizers simple.
- Choose familiar recipes.
- Avoid overcomplicating the menu.
- Use seasonal ingredients whenever possible.

The heart of hosting isn't about an elaborate meal. It's about the people gathered around your table.

Set the table ahead of time

There's something satisfying about walking into a room where the table is already waiting, with candles glowing,

flowers arranged and place settings complete.

Setting the table the night before reduces last-minute stress. A beautiful table doesn't have to be elaborate to feel special.

Dinner party essentials:

- Layered place settings and cloth napkins
- Candlelight for ambiance
- Fresh flowers or greenery
- Serving utensils for each dish
- Water glasses filled before guests arrive

Thoughtful details help the evening flow smoothly.

Create a welcoming atmosphere

The best dinner parties feel effortless to guests, even though the host has carefully planned every detail.

Hosting tips:

- Offer both alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages.
- Create a signature cocktail that complements the theme.
- Light candles before guests arrive.
- Keep the atmosphere warm and inviting.
- Spend as much time as possible with your guests, not in the kitchen.

Guests may not remember every dish, but they'll remember how the evening made them feel.

Don't forget the music

Music helps set the mood before the first conversation begins. Create a playlist that complements the evening and let it play quietly in the background.

Playlist ideas:

- Italian café jazz for a European-inspired dinner
- Acoustic music for a cozy fall gathering
- Upbeat lounge music for a summer evening
- Soft holiday classics for seasonal entertaining

The right music never competes with conversation. It simply encourages guests to linger a little longer.

The secret to a memorable dinner party



A colorful summer charcuterie board featuring seasonal fruits, artisan cheeses, and fresh flavors creates an effortless centerpiece for entertaining.



An all-white tablescape accented with vibrant green apples adds a fresh, elegant touch to a summer Dinner en Blanc-inspired gathering. Photos contributed by High Heeled Hostess

The guests who linger long after dessert. The table no one wants to leave. The conversations that deepen as the evening unfolds. That's the true magic of entertaining.

Don't strive for perfection. A memorable dinner party is about warmth, connection and creating a comfortable space where people can relax and enjoy one another.

Noelle Sharbaugh, the High Heeled Hostess, is a published and award-winning tablescape designer dedicated to helping others create memorable dining experiences. For more seasonal inspiration and hosting tips, visit www.highheeledhostess.com or email noelle@highheeledhostess.com.

Ordinary objects become extraordinary in Julia Tova Malakoff's new mixed-media exhibition

Submitted by Reston Art Gallery

"The Poetry of Everyday Things" opens Aug. 1 at Reston Art Gallery and Studios, featuring layered collages inspired by the overlooked beauty of everyday life.

Mixed-media artist Julia Tova Malakoff invites viewers to see the familiar through fresh eyes. This solo exhibition is on view at Reston Art Gallery and Studios through Aug. 29. The exhibition features vibrant mixed-media collages inspired by the ordinary objects that shape daily life

Working with hand-painted and upcycled papers, cardboard, ink, pastel, and expressive mark-making techniques, Malakoff builds each composition through a process of cutting, arranging, and layering. The resulting works balance abstraction with recognizable forms, encouraging viewers to slow down and discover new meaning in objects they might otherwise overlook.

"You don't have to travel far to find lit-

tle pockets of joy," said Malakoff. "Spaces of domesticity aren't merely spaces of reserve and confinement. They are instead opportunities for capturing candid moments, for putting the life back in still life."

"The Poetry of Everyday Things" marks Malakoff's sixth solo exhibition at Reston Art Gallery and Studios, reflecting her longstanding relationship with the gallery and its patrons. A public reception with the artist will be held on Sunday, Aug. 9, 2 to 4 p.m. The exhibition and reception are free and open to the public.

About the artist

Reston mixed-media artist Julia Tova Malakoff creates vibrant works that blend bold acrylics with organic, hand-painted papers and colored tissue, drawing inspiration in part from Henri Matisse. Balancing neutral tones with richly saturated color, her work elevates ordinary, fleeting moments into elegant visual vignettes. Her work has been featured in regional



"Poetic Frenzy"

exhibitions, including the Jo Ann Rose Gallery and the Reston Art Gallery, establishing her as a distinctive voice in Northern Virginia's arts community. Learn more at JuliaMalakoff.com.

LIFESTYLE

Opening doors, building community at Moorings Cluster

By Ellyn Wexler, staff writer

One of the pleasures of living in Reston is its strong sense of community, but those connections don't just happen on their own. Sometimes they begin with one neighbor willing to open a front door.

For nearly eight years, Karen Marston has been doing exactly that.

Soon after Karen and her husband, Rob, moved to Moorings Cluster on Lake Anne in the fall of 2017, she noticed an opportunity to help neighbors get to know one another. The waterfront townhome community, built in 1971-72, includes 48 homes, about two-thirds of them bordering the lake.

A self-described "very social person" and extrovert, Marston had organized neighborhood gatherings before. While living in Springfield for 26 years, she started a monthly girls' night out after families whose children had been on the community swim team found themselves missing the friendships they'd built together. During another move to Rhode Island, she formed a Bunco group.

When the Marstons settled into Moorings Cluster, Rob suggested starting a neighborhood happy hour for couples. "He was completely on board," Marston said.

The first Moorings Cluster Happy Hour was held in January 2018 at the Marstons' home. Invitations went out to the entire neighborhood, and the response was

enthusiastic. Before long, Karen had been named the community's social director.

Originally scheduled for the last Wednesday of each month, the gatherings now take place whenever the month's hosts choose. Typically, about 15 neighbors attend, although the most recent happy hour drew 21 people, including the hosts.

Each household brings an appetizer or dessert to share along with its own beverages. Hosts simply provide ice, paper plates and utensils, although some prefer to use their own dinnerware. At the end of the evening, guests take home their serving dishes and any leftover food.

The format keeps hosting simple while making it easy for everyone to participate, including neighbors with vegan, gluten-free or dairy-free diets.

The happy hours also satisfy neighbors' curiosity. Since nearly every townhouse has the same floor plan, guests enjoy seeing how each homeowner has customized the space. "At the beginning, everybody was curious about who we were and what we had done to make the house our own," Marston said.

Today, visitors still stroll through each host's home, comparing decorating styles, renovations and creative uses of the shared layout.

More importantly, Marston said, the evenings help create lasting friendships. "You learn about the things you have in common with your neighbors," she said. "It brings the community together."

Even the COVID-19 pandemic couldn't stop the gatherings for long. After pausing during the height of the pandemic, neighbors resumed meeting outdoors in backyards and neighborhood tot lots, bringing their own tables and chairs, using hand sanitizer and disposable tableware, and spacing themselves appropriately.

Marston maintains an email distribution list for the happy hours and always gives residents the option to be removed. No one has ever asked.

Instead, neighbors frequently stop her while she's out and about to ask when the next gathering will be held or to volunteer to host one themselves. "I get many thank-yous," she said.



Moorings Cluster happy hour has been going since 2018-- a true testament to Reston being conducive to tight-knit community.
Photo contributed by Karen Marston

One rule has remained in place from the beginning: no sales pitches. The happy hours are about building relationships, not promoting businesses. An exception came when one resident, a quilting artist with an exhibit at Lake Anne, invited neighbors to gather at the gallery so they could enjoy her work together.

As the neighborhood has evolved, so have the conversations. Only two families in the cluster now have young children. Most residents are empty nesters whose children are in college, getting married or raising families of their own.

"It's a way for people to meet each other that's not a board meeting," Marston said. "You sit and chat and get to know each other."

The monthly happy hours are just one of the social traditions she organizes. Each fall, Moorings Cluster also holds a neighborhood barbecue that is consistently well attended.

For Marston, the recipe for building community doesn't require elaborate planning or expensive events. It simply takes neighbors willing to spend an evening together.

"You don't have to look for community," she said. "You create it."



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Hitting the Open Road

By Phantom Foodie

I was cruising around Reston Town Center one evening and hit the brakes at Open Road Restaurant & Bar. I'd never been, so I brought two phriends along.

Sometimes you stumble upon a restaurant that feels like a road trip you didn't plan but are glad you took. Open Road is that kind of place: sprawling, spirited and unapologetically American. Here's my distilled take.

We arrived to a lively crowd and were greeted and seated promptly. The space is massive, think wide-open highways, not cozy country lanes. The noise level runs high, as expected for a venue that doubles as a sports bar, but the energy suits the space. Come prepared to lean across the table.

Before the menus arrived, a bowl of

complimentary popcorn landed on the table. Salty, simple and a welcome start, or perhaps a clever nudge toward the drink order. We skipped the cocktail menu and instead opted for a nonalcoholic beverage, which took a minute to find tucked among the alcoholic offerings. Worth noting: Open Road has its own distillery, Open Road Distilling Co., with house-made vodka, gin, bourbon and barrel-aged rye. That's a road worth traveling, rideshare recommended, on our next visit.

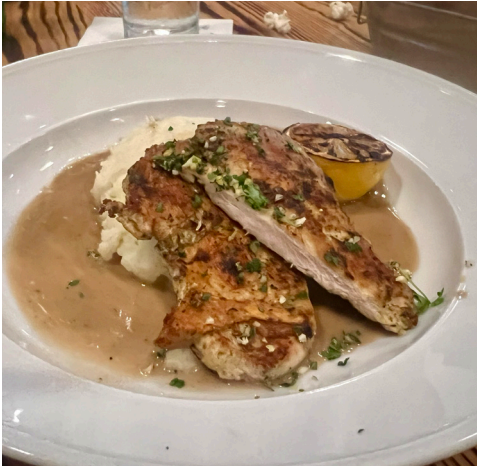
We started with the crispy onion rings, which were well executed, golden and easily shareable. My Brick Chicken arrived with crispy skin and was evenly cooked, paired with creamy garlic mashed potatoes that quietly stole the show. The Atlantic salmon came beautifully marked from the grill, resting on a hearty farro salad with spinach, assorted mushrooms, halved plum tomatoes and olives. The portion was generous without being overwhelming. One note: The chef recommended medium, but the consensus at the table was that medium-rare would have been preferable.

We also sampled the Margherita pizza. Tasty, thin and a solid choice for the table. Then came the S'mores Bar: warm, gooey and deeply satisfying. It was the kind of dessert that evokes campfire nostalgia. Do not skip it.

Service was friendly, attentive and un-



Salmon



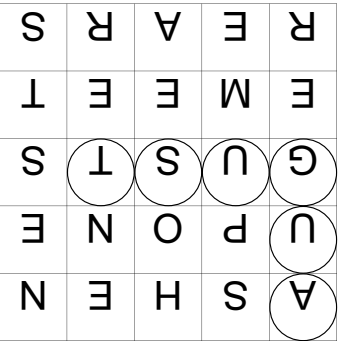
Brick Chicken

hurried. Our server checked in without hovering, kept things moving and made the evening feel easy until it was time to close out. Splitting the bill became something akin to cracking the Enigma code at the point of sale. Open Road isn't trying to be something it isn't. It's a big, loud, fun American restaurant with good food, strong bones and a distillery waiting to be explored. The first trip went well, and we'll be back for a Commanders game, along with Ms. Foodie, to check out the Heirloom speakeasy hidden inside.

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