

THE RESTON LETTER

Restonians Say No to Casino Bill Fairfax County Casino Legislation Paused Until 2025

By Dylan Murphy, Staff Writer

A steadfast community struggle resulted in a victory for Reston, which is no longer on the list of target locations for Sen. Dave Marsden's (D-Burke) proposed casino bill.

Mac Cummins, Reston Association CEO, was a prominent opponent to a casino in Reston, and met with Marsden to share the community's concerns. Prior to the bill's passing, as a direct result of the Association's advocacy and the efforts of other community groups, Reston was removed as a possible location for the casino. Cummins released a letter reacting to Reston's exclusion, describing it as a "positive turn and one that shows our legislators are indeed listening to the views of the community."

The Senate Committee on General Laws and Technology approved the bill by a vote of 10-4. The bill's next stop was the Senate Finance & Appropriations Committee, where a subcommittee voted to delay the bill until 2025. Should the bill eventually pass the General Assembly and be signed into law by Governor Glenn Youngkin, Fairfax County voters would still have to approve a referendum before the casino plan could become a reality. Five locations remain in play, Ty-



Legislation that could approve a Reston casino is no longer on the table this year. Construction goes on at Reston Station north of the toll road, but not on the south side of the station, a proposed casino site. Photo by Benjamin Burgess

sons among them.

Throughout his advocacy for the bill, Marsden has maintained that the building site should be in Tysons. In an interview with NBC4, Marsden revealed he had his eye on a "defunct auto dealership" off Route 7 in Tysons as the optimal location. The spot is the former Aston Martin and Bentley dealership, left vacant after a disastrous fire in April 2023. The property was sold later to Tysons Development LLC.

For months, the Reston community has shown overwhelming opposition toward the development of a casino near the Wiehle-Reston Station. A Change.org petition titled "Say No to a Reston Casino!" gained thousands of signatures. Now called "Say No to a Fairfax County Casino," it has swelled to almost 7,500 signatures at the time of publication.

Reston resident Suzanne Zurn started
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Restonians and More Take a Cold Dip in Lake Anne

By Caroline Ayres, Staff Writer

Onlookers gathered to watch the start of the Kiwanis Polar Dip at Lake Anne at 2 p.m. on Feb. 10. Despite the unusually warm weather, the water in the lake was still cold enough to strike fear into the hearts of most who would even dare to get close to it. However, fear of the icy depths did not stop participants in the Polar Dip from diving in in the name of charity.

The event was run by the Tysons Corner chapter of Kiwanis, an international organization which has been around for over 100 years. Their primary goals are to help children and build communities.

The Polar Dip raised over \$21,000 for Reston organizations, such as Friends of Reston (a local organization that in part funds community projects) and Food for Neighbors (an organization which combats food insecurity), as well as several Kiwanis-based children's organizations. A portion of the money raised is for Camp Sunshine, a camp for children with life-threatening illnesses and their families.

Jumpers were excited to get into the wa-



Polar Dip jumpers take a leap. Photo by Patricia Kovacs

ter, some in support of different organizations, and some for the thrill of the frigid water. "Oh no, I'm not scared," said Cyrus Sharafi, one of the jumpers. "I made sure to bring my Speedo; that's how not scared I am!" Jumpers' outfits ranged from shorts and T-shirts to rainbow squid hats (which, yes, went into the drink right along with them). At the end, several Kiwanis volunteers hurled themselves into

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THE BULLETIN

'Friends of Reston Regional Library' Donates \$100,000

Contributed by Friends of the Reston Regional Library

Every day, donated books come to the Reston Regional Library. And every day, for almost 40 years, there have been volunteers there to take them in. These days, on average, the Friends of the Reston Regional Library process about 40 tons, yes tons, of donated materials each year. They sort, box, and store donated materials, and then, seven times a year, they unbox, set out, and sell the materials to the community at seven annual book sales – arranging tables, bookcases, and displays in the meeting rooms and the lobby, ringing up transactions, finding new homes for good-condition used books in all kinds of categories.

And what happens to the money they raise? They give it right back. The Friends of Reston Regional, and other Friends groups in Fairfax County, raise funds to help their respective branches pay for everything from programming to materials to furniture, sometimes even plants for the garden. Sometimes a group will go beyond their branch and contribute directly to the library system as a whole.

During the annual Mystery and Thriller Book Sale, the Friends of the Reston Regional Library presented a

check for \$100,000 to the Library to buy more books for the Children's Collection. According to the Collection Services Department, these are some of the most heavily used books and the ones in most constant need of refreshment and expansion. Funds will be immediately available, and the CSD team is already set to begin purchasing new books.

Because FCPL has a 'floating collection,' the books don't belong to just one branch --- patrons will be able to check them out at any and all branches. "Kids need libraries more than ever now, not less. This gift will help the library system add more much-needed books for kids and young adults," an FRRL spokesperson said. "There will be fiction and non-fiction, picture books, series books like 'The Princess in Black' and 'Dogman,' chapter books, novels.... The Collection Services team is amazing – we know they will get the very most out of every dime."

Friends groups do look through donated books to see if there are any the library can add directly to the collection. But, especially when the library needs to update and expand the books they offer, the right books are hard to come by and must be bought new. That takes a lot of funding. While a book at the Friends book sale



Friends of Reston Regional Library present their check. Photo by Patricia Kovacs

averages around \$2, new kids books for the library's collection can cost anywhere from \$7 to \$14 apiece. So the next time you're wondering what to do with those best-selling novels you've finished reading, or that biography you just never got to, consider donating them to your local library Friends group.

Casino, cont'd from page 1

the petition on Sept. 26 when intentions to build a casino re-emerged. "I started the petition to help educate the public about this issue and to engage their advocacy to oppose any effort to bring a casino to our community," she said. "Over the past five months, our elected officials and the majority of adults surveyed have made clear that a casino would have detrimental effects on the social fabric, safety, economic stability, and overall quality of life."

Residents argued that despite the stated goal of economic development, a casino would diminish the quality of life and alter the community's suburban, residential character. Others have pointed out that the project is derived from a single development company's ambition, rather than a community-directed discussion. The casino plan conflicts with the Reston Comprehensive Plan that guides the future of Reston, one where the Reston Station area would evolve to offer higher education, affordable housing, and retail. Critics have argued that a casino would not accomplish its alleged goals of long-term economic growth or stability, and could have adverse effects on the economy and community welfare. A casino

could prove a financial detriment to local residents, particularly those with a gambling addiction or in a precarious economic position.

Marsden has denied that there is any significant community opposition to the bill. At a Jan. 22 hearing, Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-Arlington) voiced skepticism that there was as much community enthusiasm for the bill as Marsden suggested. "You're going to expect some opposition to any proposal like this," Ebbin said during the hearing. "But I've gotten a few hundred letters."

Hunter Mill Supervisor Walter Alcorn has been a firm critic of the bill, having said that his position "has not changed since I first became aware of casino interest in the Dulles corridor late last year. The land around these stations is already valuable for so many other socially beneficial uses, and plopping a casino into these emerging transit-oriented development communities during their formative years is a bad idea."

Marsden and other proponents of the bill have suggested that a casino might operate as a part of a larger entertainment district, a project proposed by the Reston Station developer Comstock. Comstock previously had been a key advocate for the casino being located near the Wiehle Metro Silver Line station. Comstock has a considerable stake in the casino development plan; in 2023 and 2024, Comstock donated more than \$637,000 to political candidates; in 2023, Comstock created its own PAC (Building a Remarkable Virginia Political Action Committee) and sent six lobbyists to Richmond to advocate for their interests.

Other Fairfax County locations have been made eligible for the casino, according to a set of particular conditions outlined in the bill. The conditions, which greatly reduce the list of target sites, require the site to be situated within one-quarter mile of an existing station on the Metro

Silver Line and within two miles of a major shopping destination containing at least 1.5 million square feet of gross building area; to lie out of the way of the Dulles International Airport flight path and outside the Capital Beltway, and to be part of a coordinated mixed-use project development.

Although Reston residents have successfully, for now, deterred attempts at imposing the casino on Reston, some Tysons residents are wary of the project coming their way. Some residents have suggested that a significant percentage of the casino's revenue might be redistributed to public works and community infrastructure. Marsden has justified the bill, saying, "In my view, this casino is needed to ensure further revenue for Fairfax County to fund schools and other vital services due to the decline in commercial real estate revenue and increases in costs for Metro and other county obligations." Similarly, other proponents have argued that the revenue will correct the recent stumbles in the commercial real estate market.

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay weighed in. "I do not have any interest in supporting a deal that would reinforce Fairfax County's status as Virginia's ATM," he said. In a letter to General Assembly leaders, McKay wrote, "...Fairfax County did not seek such authority and has not been substantively involved in the development of the casino concept envisioned by stakeholders and the patron of the legislation. It likely comes as no surprise to you that the location and concept included in the legislation and reported in the media has generated significant community concern and opposition. Furthermore, since a community engagement process was not conducted prior to the bill being introduced as it was in other jurisdictions, we believe the bill in its current forum is likely to result in strong community opposition to the future referendum."

In a similar vein to the way Reston community organizations spoke

out against the bill, the Vienna Town Council and McLean Citizens Association have come out against the decision. Skeptical at best and outraged at worst, the community reaction has centered around unanswered questions as to where exactly the revenue will be directed, and what the site selection process will be.

Leading up to the first General Assembly session of 2024, Christopher Clemente, CEO of Comstock Holding Companies, donated \$180,000 to Comstock's PAC, according to state campaign finance reports. The PAC also donated \$10,000 each to the campaigns of Scott Surovell (D-Mount Vernon), Lamont Bagby (D-Richmond), Mammie Locke (D-Hampton), Luke Torian (D-Dumfries), and Bryce Reeves (R-Orange). Since January 2023, Surovell has received \$95,000 in contributions from Comstock. Last November, Senate Democrats elected Surovell as Majority Leader.

The PAC also donated \$15,000 to the campaign of Todd Pillion (R-Abingdon), and amounts ranging from \$5,000 to \$15,000 to the VA House Democratic Caucus, the VA House Republican Caucus, the VA Senate Democratic Caucus, the VA Senate Republican Caucus, and the VA Legislative Black Caucus.

Last September, Clemente and his father-in-law Dwight Schar, a former owner of the Washington Commanders and founder of NVR, Inc (the third-largest home builder by revenue in the U.S.), hosted a fundraiser for Surovell and Marsden, the latter of whom received \$35,000 in contributions from sources connected to Comstock, again according to state campaign finance reports.

By the grit and determination of a largely united Reston community, the area is no longer in consideration for a Silver Line casino redevelopment this year, and many of the informed citizens of Reston are now aiding other possible sites in their opposition as well.

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THE BULLETIN

Spotlight on Faith: Southview Community Church

Contributed by Southview Community Church

Southview Community Church, established in 1978, held its first service in an elementary school in Reston. As the church grew, it found a permanent home on the corner of Reston Parkway and McLearen Road.

Situated in the heart of the community, Southview is dedicated to making a positive impact on the lives of individuals in the local area and around the world. Our doors are open to everyone; no matter who you are or where you've been, you will be welcomed with open arms. Our worship experiences are filled with uplifting music and a relevant message that speaks to the realities of your daily life. Our aim is to help you foster a deeper connection with God amid the challenges and joys of modern life.

Our kids ministry is designed to make learning about Jesus fun and engaging. From our nurturing nursery for the little ones to our exciting preschool and elementary programs, children will have a blast with age-appropriate activities

like dancing, singing, crafts, snacks, and making new friends. Our dedicated team ensures a safe and enriching environment where children can discover and grow in their faith.

Southview Community Church is taking a stand against hunger in our community by hosting a food drive on Sunday, Feb. 25, 2024 from 10:00am - 11:30am. All donations will go to the food pantry at Western Fairfax Christian Ministries (WFCM), a local non-profit that provides food and financial support to over 500 households each month that are at risk of hunger and homelessness in Fairfax County.

Nearly 1 in 4 people in Fairfax County are facing food insecurity and the local community coming together can make a real difference in the lives of our neighbors who are struggling to put food on the table. To make it easy, we've put a list of urgently needed items at www.southview.org/out-reach.

Southview is located at 2620 Reston Parkway. Services begin at 10 a.m. on Sundays. For information, visit southview.org.



Southview Community Church is located on Reston Parkway. Photo contributed by SCC

Making an Impact

Remembering the Beloved Liz Knapp

By Chuck Cascio, Author and Former South Lakes Teacher

Small actions can create a big impact. Elizabeth ("Liz") Burgoyne Knapp instinctively knew how a smile can bring happiness. How empathy can counteract loneliness. How advice can inspire confidence. How commitment can foster achievement. How presence can stimulate new awareness. Sadly, Liz died on Jan. 13, after suffering a stroke, but the positive, lasting impression she made on students, staff, family, and community will be endless.

The impact of Liz Knapp's small but powerful actions was felt during and beyond her nearly three decades as an office assistant at South Lakes High School, a job she began in 1989.

Throughout her years at South Lakes, Liz knew that all of those seemingly simple actions—and more—can influence people's thoughts and decisions, sometimes for just a moment but often for longer.

Liz made such a vital impact simply because Liz was always Liz. Her laugh was contagious. Her confidence was inspirational. Her kindness was unmatched. Her belief that almost anything CAN be accomplished was motivational. Her concern for all people was genuine. And her greeting of "Home of the Seahawks and darn proud of it," when answering the phone or meeting visitors to SLHS in person, became known as "Classic Liz."

It is frequently said that leadership starts at the top and is reflected throughout an organization. That is certainly true, but Liz showed that regardless of the position one holds, real leadership stems from the heart. A school is often the foundation of the community in which it is located because it reflects the characteristics of its leaders and dominant members. Liz's deep commitment to SLHS students, staff, and visitors had an immeasurable impact on Reston, where she lived with her husband, Richard, and their two children, Peter and Heather.

Born on Sept. 11, 1946, in Liverpool, England, Liz moved with her family in 1955 to Buffalo, New York. After earning her college degree from Hardbarger Business



"She made everyone who walked into SLHS feel like family."

College in North Carolina, she moved to Washington, D.C., where she and Richard married. They moved to Reston in 1972 and she immediately became active in the community. At SLHS, Liz quickly became a key member of the staff, beloved by students and faculty alike. She was asked to deliver graduation speeches by several senior classes, chaperoned many graduation parties, was the driving force in establishing the SLHS Sports Hall of Fame, and so much more.

The announcement of Liz's death created an outpouring of loving memories that reflect her powerful, though often subtle, presence on anyone and everyone who worked at SLHS or who visited there for personal or educational purposes. Those memories are rooted in the lasting impact of Liz's humorous comments, her sincere supportive advice, and the way she always managed to work through deeply entangled administrative issues.

Following is just a small sample taken from the hundreds of emotional tributes posted on social media after people learned of her death. After learning of Liz's death that speak to her contributions:

- "I got to spend every day of my senior year as Elizabeth Burgoyne Knapp's second period office assistant, and I will cherish all of her words of wisdom. Mrs. Knapp was like a mom to me."
- "I wouldn't be here today if it weren't

for her love and kindness. I'm sure I am not the only one who can honestly say their youth wouldn't have been the same had it not been for her. I'm a better person because I knew her and will hold onto all the memories we had together."

- "She was an amazing woman, such a force of nature and an absolute icon in the Reston/South Lakes community."
- "She lit up the room when she came into one and was always generous kind."
- Her quirky British sense of humour always kept us chuckling."
- "Mrs. Knapp was a part of so many students' experiences at SLHS. She was the heartbeat of that school for so many years."
- "She was a beautiful soul and will be missed by many. She was most definitely an influential adult and mentor to me in my young years."
- "It's impossible to overstate her impact on the thousands of us who grew up with her around at SLHS."
- "Liz was a tour de force in the South Lakes community. Every day she gave her all -- from helping us stand up the Food Pantry to the Sports Hall of fame and every student, teacher, and administrator in between. She loved the SL community and we all loved her back."
- "She made every day at South Lakes a pure joy. She was more than the wonderful person in the main office. She was my sounding board, a source of wit and humor, and most of all, my friend."
- "I will take all of your words of wisdom with me. I will always hear your voice saying 'toots' and 'twitt' and will forever be thankful for all the times you came to important things in our life. You were ALWAYS there."
- "She made everyone who walked into SLHS feel like family."
- "The South Lakes family was so blessed to have known Mrs. Knapp. She touched so many lives. She was South Lakes High School."
- "Those of us who worked with Liz at SLHS as I did for a number of years know this: It is said, 'It takes a village to raise a child.' Well, Liz Knapp was a village within a village."

Lake Anne, cont'd from page 1

the lake as well.

Sponsors of the event ranged from Northwest Federal Credit Union, The Reston Community Center and Reston Association, to Kalypsos, to the Fairfax County Cold Water Dive Team. Some of their members were in the water themselves to ensure the safety of the participants. The event also featured different artisan stalls from Lake Anne's winter market, ranging from handmade wooden bowls to soap makers.

The Kiwanis Polar Dip is not only fun to watch, but a wonderful way to make a difference in the community. The Dip will be back next February, and hopefully (for the sake of the jumpers), the weather will be nice once again.



Photo by Patricia Kovacs

THE RESTON LETTER

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THE BULLETIN

Bricks By the Lake Draws Hundreds

By Dawn Crosson, Editor

The Reston Museum’s annual Bricks by the Lake event on Jan. 27 drew hundreds to view spectacular LEGO builds from Charm City LUGS (LEGO Users Group), and to compete in a brick-building competition. Visitors voted on their favorite LUGS builds. All were impressive, but the biggest, the 11-foot tall space rocket, will be on display at the museum until the end of February.

Contestants had the chance to build in various categories: Live, Work, Play, and Memories, based on age. Each team had 45 minutes to build, using identical boxes of bricks supplied by the museum. Judges voted on the winners in each group, and NOVA Labs created trophies based on each theme.

The museum initiated the event in 2021 – outside on the plaza at Lake Anne – to engage the community in a socially distanced way. Now it takes place indoors at the Reston Community Center and the Reston Museum, both at Lake Anne.

To go along with the event, Restonian Nathan Hagan designed original, limited edition brick kits. This year’s build, Reston’s Van Gogh Bridge, can be purchased at the museum. “People can take home and build their own little part of Reston out of LEGOs,” said Alex Campbell, the museum’s executive director.

To learn more about the event and the Reston Museum, listen to our February Podcast with Executive Director Alex Campbell by scanning the QR code on the right or visit our website”.



Master builders brought their builds to Bricks by the Lake. Photo by Isadora Guerriero

"Jeopardy!" Competition Features Reston Resident

By Ellyn Wexler, Staff Writer

Reston native Suzanne Goldlust took a star turn in “Jeopardy’s” Champions Wildcard tournament, which aired Feb. 8. The former competitor on the iconic quiz show received an email invitation to participate a second time in early December.

“Normally, ‘Jeopardy!’ is a one-and-done sort of event; no one ever gets to take a second bite of that apple,” said Goldlust, who works as Marketing Manager for Internet

Systems Consortium. “This season, they started a tournament for people who had won one or two games.”

Goldlust, an alumna of South Lake High School and University of Virginia, first applied for the game show in 2013. “I made it to the interview stage, and went to New York for an in-person tryout,” but was not invited to be on the show. Her interest piqued by Amy Schneider’s winning streak, Goldlust started watching the show again – every night, she proceeded to take the online test and earn a Zoom tryout.

“I had pretty much forgotten about it until early March 2023, when I received a call and text from someone at Son,” Goldlust said. “I taped on April 4, and my shows aired June 15 and 16. I won \$18,700 in my first game and then came in third in my second game -- for which I received \$1,000.

Goldlust identified qualities that make her a good player. “I’ve always had a good head for a lot of little details. I tend to remember everyone’s

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Restonian Suzanne Goldlust competed in Jeopardy! champions round last week. Photo by Sony Picture Studios

Help Local Pets with Reston Girl Scout Troop



Reston Girl Scouts

Contributed by Troop 51006

As part of their service to the community, Girl Scout Troop 51006 is holding a donation drive for the Fairfax County Animal Shelter from Feb. 3 through March 3.

Items to be collected: dog and cat food and treats (unopened), dog leashes, cat scratch pads, milk replacement for kittens, toys.

Donations can be dropped off at Weber’s Pet Supermarket, 2280 Hunters Woods Plaza, Reston, VA 20191. The cadets would like to thank Weber’s for their support for both the Girl Scouts and Fairfax County Animal Shelter.

Kyle Knight, Reston Businessman

By Chuck Cascio, Staff Writer

Kyle Knight clearly enjoys his office space at Bowman Green Center off Reston Parkway, where his State Farm Insurance agency has been located for 27 of his 29 years as an agent. His gregarious personality often generates laughs from staff members and clients alike.

But when it comes to customer service, Knight is all business. “Being a straight-shooter and helping others by protecting what is important to them” was Knight’s response when asked about his primary attributes in his career as a successful agent. “Having great people around me is also a key to success,” he added without hesitation. “The old saying that ‘You’re only as good as the people around you’ is true in any facet of life, and my team in the office is great.”

Knight’s roots in the insurance business run deep; his father was a State Farm agent who “taught me the details after I graduated from business school at George Mason University in 1992.” Knight soon branched off into the agency he owns today. He attributed his success in large part to “my great parents and the work ethic I learned through them.” In

the insurance business, he noted, the greatest satisfaction comes from “being there for someone when they need you after they have suffered personal or financial hardship or any loss; that is powerful and gratifying.”

Knight also acknowledged that attending elementary, middle, and high school in Reston and living in the community for 27 years have given him what he described as “a home field advantage. Business is about relationships and taking care of people. I have roots here, and many of my clients are past schoolmates from Reston.” In fact, he said, the close relationships he established growing up in Reston led to lasting friendships: “The schools produced a great education in addition to giving me the best friends in my life. All of my buddies are from Reston.”

The community element is important to Knight who said he has enjoyed seeing “the major changes in Reston, specifically the commercial development. Reston has turned into a metropolis, which I love. There is now a mix of residential and commercial real estate that is great for business and for the local economy.”



Photo by Isadora Guerriero

Another benefit of community growth Knight cited is that “the growth has also contributed to an increased diversity of the population. There is now a great mix in the population – longtime Restonians, who make up the fabric of the community, in addition to the infusion of new blood brought in by the Metro.” Knight appreciates the diversity from both business and community perspectives, and the growth has added to his personal and professional commitment. He sponsors local school teams and leagues “in order to give back to the community.”

Knight’s deep affection for Reston was perhaps best summed up when he said, “Geographically, Reston is the ideal place to do business. We are close to Loudoun County’s growth, Tysons Corner, and Washington, D.C. In essence, Reston is the epicenter of the region.”

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THE BULLETIN

Reston Woman's Podcast Turns Two Years Old

By **Conor Gillingham, Intern**

Restonian Leslie Kane started her podcast, "Why Not Today," almost two years ago. She is on track to release her 60th episode by the time the two-year anniversary comes around on March 5.

Kane started "Why Not Today" to share new and courageous stories from ordinary people. The podcast was inspired by her father, Patrick Kane. Patrick Kane was beloved in Reston, and involved in many facets of early Reston life. He often said "Why not today?" and jumped into new challenges headfirst with courage. He helped start The Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce, and the nonprofit Gabriel Homes. He was also part of RCC-Reston Catholic Community before St. Thomas à Becket Church was established, and involved with RCA (Reston Citizens Association) prior to being called Reston Association.

To honor and share her father's legacy, Kane finds stories and shares them on her podcast, which she started on March 5, 2022, the anniversary of her father's birth and death.

Kane's volunteer work showed her the fascinating lives of people in different places like Kalypso's Sports Tavern, Kids of Reston, and Shelter House. She appreciates all the work people put in so that life can keep moving, and figured the podcast was a way of giving the unsung heroes the credit they deserve.

"I'm just trying to do more, to get with people and share stories," Kane says. "My mom, who's 82, doesn't want to sit behind a computer and tell her story. She wants to tell the world, and for people to be there to soak it all in."

Kane started her podcast initially by interviewing people who lived in Reston. She has started hosting guests outside Virginia, one of whom is Stacey Abella, a traveler and author from Ohio who Kane found on social media via a mutual friend, her father's dentist in Virginia. Reaching outside Reston, Kane said, allowed her to realize what a blessing it is to grow up in a community like Reston that fosters inclusion and acceptance regardless of background.

As of now, "Why Not Today" is being listened to in 26 different countries.



Lifelong-Restonian Leslie Kane started her podcast in honor of her late father, Patrick Kane. Photo contributed by Leslie Kane

To check out Kane's stories, visit www.whynottodaypodcast.com

Jeopardy, cont'd from page 4

birthdays and phone numbers," she said. "I love to read and am interested in a lot of different topics and have a lot of interesting friends who teach me stuff."

She also is unafraid of being on stage. "I did a lot of theater in junior high and high school ... although none of my

high school productions had millions of people watching me on TV! [And] I am pretty laid back in general, and I like to have a good time!"

Her best categories? "I was a French major in college, and also studied Spanish and German, and have always been good at languages, so the foreign language categories were pretty strong for me. I also did well in the Bird Idioms

category in my first game last year."

Goldlust has a few regrets about what she should have known. "Pretty much everything I missed, except the sports questions. Especially *I* Walk the Line in the Final Jeopardy of my Champions Wildcard game. I would have won if I'd gotten that right."

In addition, "There were a lot of answers that I knew and just couldn't

buzz in fast enough, but that's how the game works."

Despite not winning, Goldlust maintains that "the whole experience was fabulous, and incredible, and so much fun. The other contestants were all so nice, and the staff and crew were friendly, and went out of their way to make sure everyone had a good time."

RELAC's Closure Prompts Community Frenzy Cooling System Referendum Ballots Due March 8

The Reston Letter

In December, RELAC (Reston Lake Anne Air-Conditioning Corporation), a utility company that provides Lake Anne area residents with air-conditioning via chilled lake water, announced that it would cease to provide its services after 2023. RELAC has been cooling homes around the lake from the time it was built in the 1960s. This announcement has left the 600 residential and 25 commercial properties in the lurch with only a few months until the warm weather hits.

The company cited several reasons for its closure: among them were rising electrical costs, and the fact that many people haven't paid their cooling bills for years. Since RELAC has no way of turning off the flow of chilled water through the homes, there are no true consequences for those residents, just a slow leak in funding for maintenance and use.

Reston Association is holding a referendum to potentially amend the relevant section of the Reston Deed: Pursuant to Section VI.2(b)(15) "any residential cluster in which central air conditioning service is available to the Lot line, no individual air conditioning units of any type shall be permitted. This covenant may only be amended or revoked by at least a two thirds vote of the Category A Members of all residential clusters on the service." Ballots will be mailed to eligible voters on Feb. 16, and ballots are due back to RA by March 8. On March 13, the board of directors will announce the results. More information can be found at www.reston.org "RELAC Referendum FAQs".

Active residents have done research and garnered support and interest in a community-driven cooperative that would serve clients currently on the RELAC system, and would be owned and controlled by community members. The co-op will be holding a virtual town hall meeting on Feb 16. from 7 to 8

p.m. via Zoom. For more information on the co-op and to register for the Zoom meeting, visit their website at www.relacwatercooling.com

Thoughts on the RELAC situation? The Letter is looking for varying viewpoints on the topic. Please email info@therestonletter.com

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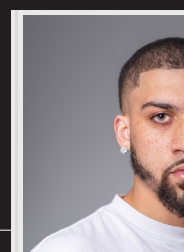


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EDUCATION

Ethics Day Returns to Reston

By Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce

The Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce partnered with South Lakes High School to produce its 31st annual Ethics Day. This long-standing community event brings together the chamber's corporate members and local community volunteers with the South Lakes Class of 2024 seniors. Students participate in a series of formally designed presentations, each focused on real-world ethical dilemmas and situations, and are provided time to discuss what they've learned in breakout groups with their peers.

This year's Ethics Day saw the return of three established modules: "The Courtroom," which recreates a true case involving a teen driver accused of being involved in a hit and run while under the influence of alcohol; "Digital Citizenship," which shows real case studies of young professionals who damaged their careers and reputations through poor decisions made in their social media usage; and "The Organ Donation," where students play the role of a hospital administrator

who must decide which of the five needy patients will receive a needed heart transplant.

"We are extremely proud of our collaboration with South Lakes High School in producing Ethics Day. It is an event that has gone on to be emulated in other communities throughout our region," said Carrie Wilmon, the chamber's marketing and communications director. "This event shows the important role the chamber plays in maintaining strong connections between the residents and businesses within Reston.

"These students are our future leaders. The volunteers and corporate sponsors, through their support and participation, have demonstrated how important it is to them to play a role in developing the minds of these young adults," she added.

More than 50 volunteers, many of whom participated for the first time, were critical to the success of bringing this event back in person for the first time since 2019.

To hear more about Ethics Day and how you can be involved, listen to the February podcast by scanning the QR code on the right.



Business leaders pose ethical scenarios for students. Photo by GRCC



South Lakes Theatre Arts Wins 32 Superior Ratings

Contributed by South Lakes Theatre

South Lakes Theatre Arts attended the 2024 Virginia Thespian Festival at the Hilton in Tysons Corner and Capital One Hall in early January. They competed in the one-act competition and more than 50 individual evaluations, known as the "Thespy's."

Their one-act, "The Spoken Word," written by Joe Calarco, and directed by theatre director Michael Viola and student August Rivers, placed second out of the 17 competing schools. Cast members Josh Lewis, Jonathan Villa, and Teagan Stacy received all-star cast member awards and the play was recognized for Most Creative Staging and Best Execution of the festival's theme, "Find Your Light."

This was the stage debut for "The Spoken Word," which was previously workshopped as a stage reading pre-pandemic at Signature Theatre. South Lakes was the first school to perform the piece that deals with themes of oppression, censorship, war,

and resistance. It's set in both 1943 Germany amidst the Nazis taking power and in a dystopian 2033 Northern Virginia. The time periods, stories, and settings intersect as the characters are confronted with their roles and responsibilities to stand up and speak out.

"Wow! What a powerful piece," commented Jeffrey Walker, a one-act judge. "The ensemble, vocal, acting, and transition work were all superbly executed. Strong individual performances worked well together as a complete ensemble building the two worlds."

South Lakes scored 32 superior ratings in a multitude of categories including: solo acting, duet acting, group acting, solo musical theatre, duet musical theatre, directing, stage management, scenic design, costume design, costume construction, makeup design, and sound design. For a full list of the superior ratings, please visit slaketheatre.com.



Members of South Lakes Theatre Arts at the Virginia Thespian Festival. Photo contributed by SLHS Theatre

Langston Hughes Middle School Students Make Forecasts

Contributed by LHMS

The "Latinas in STEM" club toured the regional office of the National Weather Service WHEN?. They launched a weather balloon and tracked it as it flew over Dulles Airport. Within an hour, it

was already floating over Delaware and was 75,000 feet off the ground.

Club members experienced the extreme conditions in which the sensors and instruments are tested, including extreme heat (60 degrees C or about 150 degrees F) extreme cold (-60 degrees C) and also salt and fog machines. Students also saw a wind tunnel that blew wind up to category 5 hurricane conditions.

They also toured the Forecast Office where meteorologists gather the data from weather instruments in the District, Virginia and Maryland. Their computers run the data through complex equations that enable them to predict weather events and patterns that will affect the areas. They communicate their forecasts to national and county officials as well as to news outlets, emergency services and, of course, all the school districts. After learning how to look at the radar maps and weather patterns, the group was pretty sure school would be closed on the snowy Friday in January hours before Dr. Reid and FCPS announced it.



"Latinas in STEM" members tour the National Weather Service office. Photo contributed by LHMS

Four out of the eight club members said they would like to consider something weather related for a career. A Hughes shout-out to the club sponsors, Ms. Noueihed and Ms. Sciaroni, ESOL Math and Science teachers.

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EDUCATION

Reston Students Win National Theater Award at Junior Theater Festival in Atlanta

Contributed by Lopez Studios, Inc.

Students representing Lopez Studios, Inc., a Performing Arts Preparatory School in Reston, won a Freddie G Excellence in Dance award and other recognition at the 2024 Junior Theater Festival Atlanta (JTF Atlanta). The monumental weekend dedicated to rewarding and celebrating excellent student-driven musical theater programs took place Jan. 12-14 at the Cobb Convention Center in Atlanta.

Lopez Studios' Ella Pfeiffer made it to the call-back to a yet-to-be announced special project promoting musical theater in schools. Students Ayden Brook and Jessica Gross were named Junior Theater Festival Performance All-Stars.

At the festival, each group performed 15 minutes of a Broadway Junior® musical for adjudicators.

Lopez Studios presented "Shrek The Musical JR." to Shay Rodgers, choreographer for education videos

produced by iTheatrics and creator of the Academy for Theatre Under the Stars, and Robert Hindsman, Adult Programs Manager with Alliance Theatre Education.

"This group was full of energy and dynamic focus," said Rodgers. "The dance training was amazing, and I look forward to seeing what they bring us in the future."

"Lopez Studio's performance of 'Shrek The Musical JR.' was explosive from the moment they stepped on the stage. Their work was incredibly energetic, and the actors were 100 percent committed to their work," Hindsman said. "Whenever the ensemble sang together, it fully took my breath away. Lopez Studios is sending some of the most confident young actors to JTF that I've ever seen on stage. It is apparent that they worked on this show for countless hours to ensure that their performers can bring their best to their performance."



Photo contributed by Lopez Studios, Inc.

Reggio's Treehouse – A Place for Inquisitive Young Minds

By Sarah Golden, Staff Writer

There is something truly wonderful about the inquisitive mind of a child. "What are leaves made of?" "What are colors?" "Why does music make me want to dance?" Some adults may find it hard to answer these kinds of questions, but at Reggio's Treehouse, these kinds of questions, and the inquiries that lead from them, are not just encouraged – they are an essential element of the teaching philosophy.

Reggio's Treehouse, a non-denominational preschool located in the Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation, caters to children eager to learn and explore the world around them. The heart of Reggio's

approach to early childhood education is project-based learning [PBL]. With PBL, Reggio's facilitators let the child guide the direction of the lesson; they listen and watch the children to understand what piques their interest, encourage them to continue to explore that topic, and create projects and activities that promote deeper learning.

For example, at Reggio's Lansdowne location, a facilitator was playing jazz music during class, prompting students to ask questions about the musical genre. The result was a weeks-long deep dive into jazz music and art inspired by jazz, culminating in a large-scale Jackson Pollack-inspired hands-on art installation. This project is

a perfect example of Reggio's belief in the hundred languages of children: there are 100 different ways children learn, whether through playing, singing, dancing, listening, feeling, or the like. All these "languages" allow children to gain a deeper understanding of the world around them.

Reggio's President Kashef Mahmud says that Reggio's seeks to create life-long learners; it's not simply a place to park your kid for the day. Although Reggio's educational approach is flexible, the facilitators follow Virginia Department of Education standards and curriculum. The secure, clean Reston location anticipates unveiling a new playground in the near future. In addition, the on-site staff have

decades of early childhood development experience.

Reggio's Treehouse accommodates children from six weeks to five years old, with five-, three- and two-day full and half-day programs, which include a morning and afternoon snack and lunch. Reggio's Treehouse is currently offering an enrollment discount for its first 20 families: \$500 tuition credit for full-time enrollment, and \$300 for part-time enrollment. To learn more about Reggio's educational approach or to schedule a visit, visit www.reggiostreehouse.com/rth-at-reston, call 703-435-5957, or email reston@reggiostreehouse.com.

Lights, Camera, Broadway!



Photo courtesy Lana Marthinsen

By Jennifer Glynn, SLHS Parent Volunteer

South Lakes High School presented "Heroes and Villains" at its annual Broadway Night on Jan. 27 and 28. Restonians packed the auditorium for three live performances that brought together the incredible talents of more than 250 students from the entire South Lakes High School pyramid, including Langston Hughes and eight local elementary schools.

Designed to showcase the prowess of our local chorus and performing arts students, the perfor-

mances featured songs from more than 20 hit Broadway musicals, ranging from "Annie" to "The Lion King" and "Sweeney Todd." Heroes sang uplifting melodies, villains delighted in their trickery, and star after budding star brought the magic and drama of Broadway to life, thanks to the direction of professional choreographers and music directors, including South Lakes' Choral Director Jessica Irish.



STEAM students, sixth-graders, and Mr. Curtis at Aldrin Elementary are participating in the "Grasses for the Masses" program at Mason Neck State Park. Students are learning how to grow wild celery, an important underwater grass. When the wild celery is mature enough, students will plant their grasses at the park to help bolster underwater grass populations. Combined with efforts to reduce pollution in the Chesapeake Bay, the restoration program helps to improve the Bay's filtering system and overall health.

Photo contributed by AES

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SPORTS

Reston Teen to Compete in World Lacrosse Women's Championship

By Ellyn Wexler, Staff Writer

In the nature vs. nurture debate, the evidence sometimes points equally to both. That seems to be the case for Brooke Frishman, the 19-year-old Old Dominion University freshman who will compete in the World Lacrosse Women's U20 Championship in Hong Kong this summer. She will represent Israel, her father's and grandfather's home country.

A midfielder known for her speed, Frishman plays Division 1 Lacrosse at Old Dominion. For her, excellence in sports is a family trait. "Brooke comes from a family of National, World, and Olympic-level athletes," said her mother, Genna Weiss Frishman, herself a seven-time U.S. National Champion and a World Champion in springboard and platform diving. "[Brooke's] grandfather Greg Weiss was a 1964 Olympian gymnast in Tokyo [and] her uncle Michael Weiss was a two-time Olympian figure skater [1998, Nagano, Japan; 2002, Salt Lake City]."

The Frishmans have lived in Reston for about three years, in Northern Virginia for more than 35. "Brooke has done her off-field training at the OneLife in Reston for years. I volunteer in Reston at an assisted living facility and for underprivileged children," Genna Frishman said.

Frishman recognized her daughter's proclivities by age 4. "What I noticed was evident early on, and very different from all the other kids, was Brooke's drive and determination to learn sports. She would work way harder than the other kids. She wanted to be the best on any team she

was on and wouldn't stop practicing until she got a skill right," she recalled.

Brooke's interest in sports was nurtured. "It was obvious she was a Weiss, born to be an athlete. I felt it was my job to find which sports would utilize her strengths both physically and mentally," her mother said.

Brooke tried a few sports; she played soccer from age 4 to 14 and was on a Junior National team; she also was All-State in track and All-Region in field hockey. But everything changed in eighth grade when she picked up her "first lacrosse stick for fun, and absolutely loved it," Brooke said. "I knew that if I wanted to play a sport at the Division 1 Collegiate level, I would have to choose one. I love all sports, but it didn't take long to realize that I have a passion for lacrosse. It just feels different; it's like a lacrosse stick was meant to be in my hand."

At Old Dominion, Brooke is majoring in political science, minoring in criminal justice and business. She belongs to her lacrosse team's Leadership Pack as well as the Pre-Law Association, and serves as an ambassador for Morgan's Message, which "strives to eliminate the stigma around mental health within the student-athlete community."

It is challenging to train while maintaining all her other commitments. "Being a Division 1 Collegiate athlete is no joke," Brooke acknowledged. "It's like having a full-time job and going to college full-time, all at the same time." She credits her mother and grandmother [former gymnast] Margie Weiss for helping her

with "time management and ... prioritizing what has to be done at certain times during my training."

In addition to her family, and supportive coaches and teammates, Brooke's personal traits foster her success. "My dedication and determination are my biggest assets. I'm known for my incredibly hard work ethic," she said. "I try to use logical thinking to process information as challenges arise. I trust and believe in the day-to-day process that will help me accomplish my goals."

Genna Frishman imparts knowledge she acquired from her father to her daughter who took on still another sport. "I learned so much from [my father] about the mental aspect of an athlete competing at the World and Olympic level," she said. "I have passed those important lessons on to Brooke, and it is so cool to see those lessons kick in when she competes."

Having appreciated how her own "experience in diving and competition at the Collegiate, National, World, and Olympic level affected my life in so many ways," Genna wanted the same for her daughter. "When my high school class was studying the Great Wall of China, I was at a diving meet in China and sending a picture back to my classmates of me doing a handstand on the Great Wall. I got to travel around the world and experience things that last a lifetime," Genna said. "Sports teaches you all kinds of lessons that carry over into life long after you've retired from sports."

Brooke understands that the "Olympic environment" shaped her. "I grew up



Photo contributed by Brooke Frishman

backstage at Olympic ice skating performances. I had dinner on a monthly basis with Olympic champions who were at one time my mother's teammates. Olympic gymnasts would visit us when they were in town," she remembered.

"In my family, everyone's houses display Collegiate, National, World, and Olympic medals and memorabilia," she added. "The influence was always there. The drive to compete is so powerful within me. My love and passion for sports is in my blood." Brooke's grandfather recently gave her his Olympic ring.

As for the immediate future, Brooke said, "I am determined to leave my mark at the Division 1 Collegiate level. I want to help leave ODU Lacrosse in a better place than when I got here. I want to take my lacrosse career as far as I can on the National, World, and Olympic level." And then, "I want to go to law school and run my own law firm one day."

Reston Volleyball Celebrates One-Year Anniversary

By Terri Wright, Staff Writer

When the 2023 basketball season wrapped up last winter, Reston Hoops players and leaders considered what sporting opportunities could be realized for the 1,000-plus annual participants.

Leadership reached out to a local trio of longtime friends – Reston residents Khuong Mulvaney, Annmarie Swope, and Kate Brown – who overlapped as collegiate athletes on the George Washington University Women's volleyball team. Post-graduation and playing days, all three found themselves settled and raising their families near each other.

Mulvaney has led instructional volleyball clinics for local clubs and orga-

nizations, Swope spearheaded and runs a before-school program at Aldrin Elementary, and Brown coaches for the Herndon high school volleyball team. Reston Hoops encouraged the three to use its infrastructure and umbrella to get the ball rolling for a recreational volleyball league for Reston youth.

With one month from registration to open play, Reston Volleyball (RVB) Commissioner Mulvaney recalls the energy of those initial weeks of promotion and planning. "Let's all run on a treadmill. Fast," was the formula. And in the blink of an eye, with 100 participants enrolled, RVB was off and running last spring.

The recreational league's mission is to generate excitement and community

while teaching sound fundamentals of volleyball. Mulvaney, Deputy Commissioner Swope, and Brown provided direct training and oversight to all team volunteers. "We try to provide a system of support for all coaches while participants learn skills and have fun," said Mulvaney.

Brown enlisted the help of Herndon high school players to work as coaches and referees. "Our goal is making [the experience] positive and intentionally focused on quality," Mulvaney said.

Reston Volleyball expects to return this spring with 18 teams. The largest and most important base for growth is the coed elementary level comprising 12 teams of fourth- through sixth-graders. Then the teams will divide by gender in



Photo by Isadora Guerreiro

six teams of seventh- and eighth-graders. New this year will be a seventh- and eighth-grade select team; a tryout is required.

Spring registration, information on available team spots, and general club information can be found on the Reston Hoops website under the Volleyball tab. **Registration closes March 1.**

Hornets Swim and Dive Team Shines at Districts

Contributed by HHS Athletics

Herndon High Swim and Dive had an amazing District Championship in January. Many swimmers had personal and lifetime best times. What a way to end the season as a team!

Double District Champion Rian Graham swam and won both the 200 free and 100 free.

Liam Rayson, Rian Graham, CJ Ho, and Eric Speer swam the **District Champion Boys 200 freestyle relay**.

Relays Results:

Sixth place - Boys 200 medley relay: Kellan Rayson, Eric Speer, Mason Leveto, Noah Lemire • **Fourth place - Girls 200 medley relay:** Ariel Ingrisano, Dani Ramsey, Morgan Wright, Deanna Tipler • **Second**

place - Boys 400 free relay: Rian Graham, Kellan Rayson, CJ Ho, Liam Rayson.

Top 16 finishers:

Boys

Liam Rayson- 2nd 100 fly 4th 100 back – **Region and State qualifying times**

• Kellan Rayson- 6th 500 free and 16th in the 200 free- **Region qualifying times** • CJ Ho- 5th 500 free, 10th 200 free- **Region qualifying times** • Eric Speer- 8th 50 free- **Region qualifier**, 15th 100 breast • Noah Lemire- 11th 50 free, 11th 100 free • Danny Saunders- 9th 100 breast- **Region qualifying time** • Rafael Baez- 14th 500 free • Mason Leveto- 13th 100 fly • Austin Collier- 16th dive, 16th 50 free • Ryan Collie-15th dive

Girls

Morgan Wright- 5th 100 fly 5th 200 free- **both Region**



The Hornets finished a successful swim and dive season. Photo Contributed by HHS

qualifying times • Ariel Ingrisano 5th 200 IM, 7th 100 back- **both Region qualifying times** • Ava Baez- 12th 100 back • Deanna Tipler- 15th 100 back, 16th 100 fly • Cassandra Buley- 14th 500 free • Dani Ramsey- 12th 100 breast • Samara O'Bryne- 13th Dive • Olivia Roche- 16th dive

SPORTS

South Lakes Indoor Track & Field are Concorde District Champs

By Laurie Dornak, Seahawk Boosters with Coach Chris Sloane

The Seahawks collected District, Region, State, and National qualifying times and distances throughout the Winter Indoor Track and Field season. On Feb. 1-2, the Seahawks put on a clinic, competing at the 2024 Concorde District Championship at the Prince George's Sports and Learning Complex in Landover, Md.

"I am so proud of this team! Both South Lakes girls and boys teams won the Indoor Track and Field Concorde District Championship! Regionals next on Feb. 14 and 15. Go Seahawks!" said Coach Chris Sloane.

The medals rolled in, and the girls won back-to-back Concorde championships (the team's 11th consecutive district championship) with 182 points over Westfield, Oakton, Madison, Chantilly and Centreville, taking second through sixth. The boys secured their championship with 157 points over Chantilly, Oakton, Westfield, Centreville, and Madison, taking second through sixth.

Womens Varsity

1. South Lakes 182
2. Westfield 70
3. Oakton 68
4. James Madison 63
5. Chantilly 43
6. Centreville 39

Mens Varsity

1. South Lakes 157
2. Chantilly 136.5
3. Oakton 72.5

4. Westfield 41
5. Centreville 40
6. James Madison 18

On day one of the meet, the teams started off strong with girls and boys 4 x 800 relay squads winning the District titles.

In the sprint races, Miles Jackson won both the boys 55m and 500m dashes. Finn Middleton won the boys 55m hurdles and placed second in the 55m dash. Cliff Trapp placed third in the boys 55m hurdles and Aiden Bednarz took fifth in the boys 500m. Sofi Pehrson won the girls 55m hurdles, and placed second in the 55m dash. Ella Laban took third in the girls 55m hurdles. Anna Dooley placed fifth in the girls 55m dash, and Melanie Velasco placed seventh. Bella Harsanyi won the girls 500m, with Aya Ryan in second, and Elizabeth Brabant in fourth.

Moving on to the 3200m distance, Catalina Simon outkicked Oakton's Caroline Sapperstein to take the win in 11:14. Irene Ha placed seventh in a new personal best of 12:13, and Lea Soderholm placed 10th. In the boys 3200m, Charlie Wilkins placed sixth, laying down a new personal best of 10:16, with teammates Kian Beumer and Nicolas Hernandez placing eighth and 11th.

In the boys pole vault, Kenji Urano placed third to finish day one strong.

Maeve Hartley started off day two strong by winning the girls shot put, with teammate Mona Bouyboud taking second. Caroline Elliott won the girls 1600m



Success keeps coming for SLHS Track and Field program. Photo contributed by SLHS Athletics

and 1000m races, setting a new District meet record in the 1000m, clocking 2:54.95. Her teammate Catalina Simon took second in both events.

Manuel Aguirre-Martinez placed fourth in the boys 1600m, with a new personal best of 4:26.33. He won the boys 1000m in a thrilling sprint finish. Jason Raffel took sixth in the boys 1600m in a new personal best of 4:26.86, and third in the 1000m. Cole Casey took fourth in the boys 1000m in a new personal best of 2:39.39; George Hood took fifth.

Bella Harsanyi took third in the girls 300m and 1000m races, with Aya Ryan placing fourth in the girls 1000m. Precious Mensah placed fifth in the girls 300m.

Miles Jackson won the boys 300m and placed fifth in the high jump and second in the long jump. His younger brother

Blake Jackson won both the boys triple jump and long jump; and placed sixth in the boys 300m. Devonne Dover placed fifth in the boys triple jump.

Ella Laban won the girls triple jump and placed fifth in the long jump. In both the girls long jump and triple, Sofi Pehrson placed fourth.

In the relays, the girls 4 x 200m and 4 x 400m squads placed second; in the boys 4 x 200m and the 4 x 400m, squads won and placed third, respectively.

Two athletes took on an impressive workload at this meet, and their efforts made a huge contribution to their teams' success. Individually, Miles and Sofi scored 40 points and 28 points, respectively.

The Northern Region meet will be on Feb. 14-15 where the girls will defend their Region title, and the boys look forward to competing for the 2024 Region title.

Seahawks to Send Three Gymnasts to States

By Laurie Dornak, Seahawk Boosters for Seahawk Athletics

The South Lakes Varsity Gymnastics team, made up of 18 gymnasts, produced a strong regular season performance, which is continuing into postseason competition. Led by 12 upperclassmen, the Seahawks are getting it done with three seniors: Amalia Wyatt, Sophia Randall and Kenzie Clifford, supported by nine juniors, Ava Adams, Taryn Dougherty, Carmen Bezdek-Hughes, McKenna Culkin, Audrey Flynn, Grace Hoebel, Madeline Miller, Sara Norford and Ariana Purdy.

This season kicked off with an excellent meet at Chantilly where the Seahawks took home second place. They quickly followed up the season opener with a Senior Night win at home hosting multiple schools. Wyatt earned second all around; Dougherty finished fourth and sophomore Jamie Banton took seventh.

Following a loss at Yorktown, the Seahawks strong core continued to make their mark. They landed victories at Westfield and Madison. At Westfield, Wyatt took first on beam and third all around; Randall finished second on vault with third place finishes on floor, beam, and bars by Dougherty, Banton, and Freshman Mithra Venkatesan, respectively. At Madison, Wyatt almost swept the meet with top finishes on beam, vault and all around while Dougherty took second on floor.



(left to right) Taryn Dougherty, Ava Adams, and Amalia Wyatt Photos by Matthew Matrani

The Seahawks finished the regular season at Oakton bringing home a second place team finish just as they had started the season.

On Feb. 1, Seahawk gymnastics competed in the 2024 Concorde District Championships. The team qualified for the Northern Region meet with a third place finish and season high team score of 137.70.

Three athletes distinguished themselves qualifying for the regional meet in individual events. Adams took fourth on beam, scoring 9.025. Dougherty finished third on vault scoring 9.300 and sixth on floor scoring 8.975. Wyatt impressively finished third all around scoring 35.975; seventh on vault scoring 9.050 and second on beam and floor scoring 9.450 and 9.375, respectively.

On Feb. 7, the Seahawks competed at the Northern Region Championship at Washington Liberty placing fourth with a season high score of 138.50 and qualified Adams, Dougherty, and Wyatt for the VHSL State Championship. Adams finished third on beam with a 9.475. Dougherty finished third and fourth on vault and floor with a 9.425 and 9.250, respectively. Wyatt shined brightly again taking third all around scoring 36.275 and first on beam and floor with a 9.525 on both apparati.

It was an exciting gymnastics season with strong District and Regional performances by the Seahawks. Reston sends our best wishes to South Lakes as they compete in the VHSL State Championship on Feb. 16.

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- U9-U19 | Travel | ECNL RL, EDP and NCSL
- U11- U19 | Suburban Friendship League
- Disabilities | TopSoccer
- Spring Break, Holiday and Summer Camps

Register for the 2024 Season!

OPINIONS

No Casino? No Problem

By Restonian, Reston Blogger

Now that the proposed casino appears no longer to have Reston in its sights, thanks to some well-organized grassroots opposition, we worry that our plastic fantastic planned community might develop a reputation as a bunch of earth-tone obsessed killjoys.

Of course, nothing could be further from the truth! I mean, we "throw down," as kids once might have said, on the pickleball courts, complain about paid parking more loudly than Lollapalooza, and enjoy so many free soda refills at our chain restaurants that it impacts their net worth. So we think it's incumbent on us to think about other, more wholesome and planned community-friendly diversions we could collectively welcome to Reston with open arms.

All-inclusive resorts. Imagine just the "play" part of "live, work, play," and all those tourists opening their checkbooks! Ideally, all amenities would be included— a romantic paddleboat ride on Lake Anne, followed by a chain restaurant meal and a CBD-infused latte.

Rollercoasters! Now that the Herndon Festival has been unceremoniously canceled, we could pick up the slack and offer, if not carnival rides of dubious provenance and sturdiness in a random parking lot, at least the endless lines to ride them.

"Skill" games. This is Virginny, by gum, and you don't need a highfalutin' casino to charge money for what are euphemistically called "skill games!" We'd plop down a bunch of quarters to play an electronic version of "is my new door in compliance with DRB regulations?"

Creekin'. Since Reston was recently highlighted as a place to visit (really!) by Southern Living (really!), let's explore our recently restored creek beds, ideally with some TNT to stun those pesky crawdads and float 'em to the surface.

Cycling. Sure, the long-delayed W&OD bridge over Wiehle Avenue isn't done yet, but the aforementioned Southern Living readers would love seeing spandex-clad cyclists attempt to recreate the jumps from the "The Dukes of Hazzard."

Parkour. Since our new office buildings — and some of our older homes — have no surfaces that meet at 90-degree angles, what better place to wall jump? For an extra challenge, more advanced enthusiasts could try the skull-crackin' concrete "play" structures adorning Reston's older neighborhoods.

Car races. While we certainly don't encourage street racing, the Reston 500 (be one of the first 500 drivers to find a spot in the Metro parking garage) would bring the bare-knuckle excitement of a Reston commuter running five minutes late to the world.

Pickleballdrome (tm). We're pretty sure our always-reasonable RA dues could easily fund an 80,000-seat pickleball stadium, complete with lasers, cyborg opponents, and trap doors for an extra surprise in particularly close games, the end.

Ask Doctor S.

What is Therapy, Actually?

Finding a therapist has become more and more challenging since the start of COVID, and we are in an era in which people are opening up about their mental health and need mental health care more than ever.

News stories and social media flood us with videos, tips, and stories around the clock with popular slogans such as "Mental health is as important as physical health," "Mental health matters," and "You are not your mental illness."

On Tik Tok and similar sites, therapy is often portrayed as a short-term experience in which a therapist immediately solves your problems and makes groundbreaking statements that will change your life. Television and movies have typically done quite a disservice to the field of therapy with their depictions of stiff, outdated therapists asking "How does that make you feel?" (with the exception of "Ted Lasso," which does a better job of portraying "actual" therapy). So, what is therapy really like?

Identifying a therapist who is right for you is somewhat similar to dating. You may need to try a few (or more) therapists before you find the best fit. Since the work in therapy occurs in the context of a psychologically safe relationship, it is critical for you to keep trying until you find that relationship. I recognize that therapists have long waitlists now, but please be patient. It will usually be worth the wait! There are some ways to try to help yourself while you are waiting for your appointment, including journaling, using mood trackers, managing your nutrition, and moving your body regularly. Checking in with your primary care physician or another trusted medical professional also can help in the interim.

At or before your first appointment, a therapist will ask you to complete and sign several forms, including basic demographic information, HIP-PA, and financial responsibilities. It takes time

for a therapist to collect all your background information in sessions. During the initial period in therapy, it is important for you to determine your comfort level with the therapist. The more comfortable you are, the more likely you are to let down your guard and share important details about yourself and your current challenges, your context and back story, your relationships, and your future. The more information you share with your therapist, the better she is able to help.

Most therapy for adolescents and adults involves talking. Your therapist can help you work through problems by helping you examine and interpret them differently, prompting you to consider alternative ways to think about them, and making changes that are within your control.

Just as it takes time to establish close friendships and other relationships, therapy takes time, too. There is no "quick fix." In my experience, spending time unpacking your history helps you recognize your maladaptive patterns of behavior and replace them with more adaptive ones.

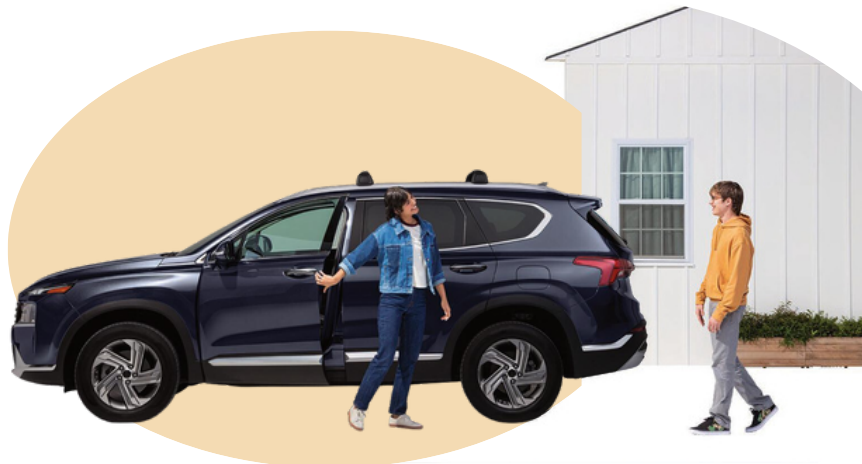
Therapy "works" best when you do the work. The work in therapy often includes getting comfortable with being uncomfortable and learning to feel your feelings. Between sessions, the clients with the best outcomes typically reflect on what transpires in the session, notice when and why they engage in certain behaviors, and, over time, regularly practice new ways of engaging with themselves and others. In other words, therapists do not "fix" you; you "fix" you. Your therapist helps light the way.

Please keep your questions coming.

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 www.oakhillpsychological.com. Please check out our website for information about our NEW PRESCRIBER!

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LIFESTYLE

Keeping Reston Green

De-icing Agents in Winter

By Reston Environmental Advisory Committee

De-icing agents containing sodium chloride (NaCl) or a blend of NaCl, magnesium chloride, and other salts are routinely applied to streets, sidewalks, and parking lots to keep us safe in winter. As a consequence, these salts are transported with meltwater into our local streams feeding the Potomac River, which is the source of Reston's drinking water. Salt cannot be removed via traditional drinking water and wastewater treatment processes. All these sources contribute to what scientists label as a "freshwater salinization syndrome" that is damaging local waterways, harming wildlife, and affecting the quality of drinking water throughout the United States which poses risks to people suffering from high blood pressure or those sensitive to sodium or chloride. Salt also harms soil and plants, weakens infrastructure such as bridges and roads, and corrodes pipes.

Although our drinking water quality remains safe for most people now, the

concentrations of salt are trending in the wrong direction in the Potomac River. The concentrations of sodium in Potomac water drawn in Loudoun County have crept up from about 10 mg/l in 1996 to nearly 16 mg/l in 2022, with occasional spikes above the EPA's health-based advisory level of 20 mg/l for people with high blood pressure. To protect aquatic life, the federal ambient water quality standard for continuous levels of chloride is 230 mg/l. So far Reston streams do not consistently exceed that level, though they often show amounts that are temporarily much higher after winter snowstorms.

What can we do to help?

- Get a faster start on winter storms and shovel snow from pavements before it turns to ice. The more snow you remove, the less salt you need and the more effective it will be.
- Be conservative in your use of de-icing agents (e.g., 1.5 cups should cover a 20 ft driveway). Putting more salt on a surface does not make snow and ice melt faster or eliminate the need for plowing



Photo contributed by Reston Environmental Advisory Committee

or shoveling.

- Don't apply when temperatures are below 15 degrees F, as it will not work then. Switch to sand or different de-icers (such as native bird seed) that work at lower temperatures.
- Take the Izaak Walton League of America's Salt Watch Pledge and receive a free Salt Watch Test Kit (<https://www.iwla.org>) to help monitor local Reston streams.

“Play In” Reston: Reflex Improv

By Casey Menish, Staff Writer

Restonians have the chance to “play in” at improv classes taught at Lake Anne. Reflex Improv was founded by Dan Brown over seven years ago. Brown taught for Washington Improv Theater in DC for years, and realized that there should be an option closer to the suburbs. Reflex Improv started as a pop-up class of five students in Brown's apartment in Fairfax, but since many of the students lived in Reston they set up a class at Brown's Chapel. From there they moved to Lake Anne in the Washington Plaza Baptist Church where they have been meeting for their Reston classes ever since.

Participants without professional comedic aspirations take classes “to get better at public speaking for work, overcome anxiety, some people just want to have fun,” said Brown. An important reminder for beginners is that, “a lot of people put pressure on themselves that they need to think of something funny or be clever, but that can actually derail improv ... funny things happen on their own, you don't even have to try very hard,” said Brown.

Steve Gurney, a longtime student of Reflex Improv shared “The way I view improv is that it is a combination of therapy and art, it's very therapeutic to live in this world of ‘yes and’ and ‘got your back.’ It's art, you never know what is going to happen, it is always something new every night.”

Improv is also a tool for professional groups to improve their teamwork and communication. At the end of a workshop that Reflex Improv hosted for a large corporate group, Dan recalls



Improv takes place in the church at Lake Anne. Photo by Casey Menish

hearing a maintenance person say to a receptionist, “I have passed by your desk every day for three years, and we have had conversations, but today is the first time we have laughed together.” Corporate workshops can help encourage teams to listen to each other and brainstorm more effectively, and can lead people to feel more comfortable putting all their ideas on the table.

Reflex Improv has been meeting in Lake Anne for years, but the group welcomes new venue options for either prac-

Continued on page 12

2022 vs 2023 Condos, Townhomes, Single Families			
AVERAGE SALES PRICE Up 5%		NO. PROPERTIES SOLD Down 20%	
2022	2023	2022	2023
571K	601K	1172	970
AVERAGE DAYS ON MARKET - DOWN 23%		AVERAGE SALES PRICE TO LIST PRICE	
2022	2023	2022	2023
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Roxanne Watts - 2023 Numbers
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Crossword Corner

By Reston crossword constructor, Joe O'Neill

Joe O'Neill, a 40-year Reston resident, is a retired former English professor and IT executive who recently began writing and submitting crossword puzzles to major U.S. daily newspapers. Several have appeared in the Wall Street Journal and one is upcoming in The New York Times. This is O'Neill's seventh crossword puzzle creation, made specifically for The Reston Letter readers!

Leap Before Looking?

ACROSS

- Shortest mo.
- 4-star review
- It's sung alone
- Beer base
- Stupefies
- What 1-Across gains quadrennially
- Response to an order at sea, often doubled

DOWN

- Very distant
- Curse supposedly given by a stare
- Thrashes
- Hampton inn rival



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LIFESTYLE

All in the Family: Reston Community Welcomes Veloce Deli

By Ellyn Wexler, Staff Writer

Veloce Deli Café & Bar is tucked into a corner of one of the two buildings of the Campus Commons office complex off Sunrise Valley Drive. You have to know where you're going to find this welcoming little eatery. Enter the address – 1900 Campus Commons Drive -- into your GPS, then drive around back for ample parking, walk over to the four outdoor picnic tables and through the doors of Reston's authentic mom-and-pop New York-style Italian deli.

Owners John and Sara Kapoor opened Veloce in August 2023. John is “the sandwich expert, the businessman, a too cool for school New Yorker,” said their daughter Nela who assists in her parents’ business with her talent for “all things creative, decision making, and passion for the brand.

Nela, in essence, holds down two full-time jobs. The 2021 George Mason University graduate with a degree in business management and arts and visual technology is a government contractor who does recruiting and project analysis.

The deli's name, “Veloce,” means “quick” in Italian, referring to John's skills as a sandwich maker and his pho-

tographic memory for every order's details. Sara, added Nela, our saleswoman, is a “perfectionist who knows exactly what we need.”

Before relocating to Reston, the deli operated out of an office building in Herndon for 11 years. Nela was not involved in the former location, but when her dad expressed doubts about opening a new business after having to close the Herndon deli due to Covid, she told him she would be there to support him.

“My parents came here from India,” said Nela. “Dad has been in the U.S. for almost 30 years. He was really young, and it was a dream of his to be here and be successful.” As newlyweds living in Queens, New York, John and Sara learned the deli business, eventually opening a bagel shop and deli, then moving to Leesburg about 20 years ago.

Veloce is open for breakfast, lunch, and happy hour. The breakfast menu offerings are egg and cheese, avocado toast, croissants, bagels, hashbrowns, and cappuccino, latte, and americano coffee. Lunch features 16 different Italian-style submarine sandwiches and four salads. The most popular sub, Nela said, is the Crazy Italian, made with capicola, mortadella, pepperoni, and salami, but the

brand-new Little Italy, made with fresh tomato, mozzarella, and prosciutto, is quickly gaining favor.

Happy hours feature an array of hand-picked local beers – including Aslan Brewing Company in Herndon -- and wines, as well as mini sandwiches and cheeseboards. “We do bespoke Happy Hour and catering events for companies and small/medium groups, which they can reach out by email [velocedeli@gmail.com] to us to schedule,” Nela said. While most of Veloce's clients currently come from the businesses surrounding the deli, this small family owned business wants to connect with the wider community. “We try to involve and buy from local small businesses. We get our cookies from a local bakery, and a beautiful yogurt soju drink, which is sweet and refreshing, from a local company,” Nela said, noting that they also have participated in events for the nearby Sunrise Valley Elementary School.

Veloce has two televisions and seating indoors at tables and the bar as well as outdoors in nice weather. Hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday and Wednesday, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Thursday and Friday. Breakfast ends at 11 a.m. Call 703-956-9074.



Veloce offers 16 different Italian-style sandwiches

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February Is National Children's Dental Health Month

By Rishita Jaju, Reston Pediatric Dentist

February is a time when we look forward to Valentine's Day and all those chocolates. And who doesn't love chocolate? So let's talk about countering sugar's effect on children's teeth. Each February, the American Dental Association promotes National Children's Dental Health Month.

Beginning on Feb. 3, 1941 as a one-day event and becoming a month-long program in the early 1980s, it is designed to promote good oral health practices from birth on.

As a board certified pediatric dentist, I must warn parents that too many chocolates and sugary foods can lead to cavities, also known as caries, in children. In fact, cavities are the number-one chronic disease children face, and if left untreated, can lead to pain, infections, and even tooth loss. Your child may even experience problems speaking, eating, and learning as a result.

Here are five quick tips for countering sugar's effect on children's teeth

1. Brushing (morning and night)

Your child should brush twice a day with a soft-bristled brush and fluoride toothpaste.

For babies, use a soft cloth to wipe your child's gums after each meal. Always brush prior to bedtime, because when we sleep, our mouth is drier, and without enough saliva, bacteria in the mouth can quickly multiply. If your children have eaten sugary or acidic foods, wait 30 to 60 minutes before brushing, as these items can soften the teeth's enamel and brushing can erode the surface.

2. Flossing (every night)

Flossing every night as early as when the first two teeth start to touch each other is the best way to prevent decay between the teeth. Using floss sticks to help with proper angle and access inside your child's mouth is a great way to get their cooperation.

3. Rinsing

Eating raises the pH level in your

mouth, creating acids that can dissolve the minerals in tooth enamel. The effect on children's teeth can leave areas vulnerable to bacteria. After eating sugary foods, have your child swish their mouth with water to rinse out the plaque-causing acid.

4. Limiting Sugary Snacks

It's OK to give your child a sugary treat once in a while, but limit snacks to short periods of time. Avoid snacking throughout the day. This can help reduce acid production created by eating, and level out saliva levels between meals. Create a diet filled with healthy non-processed foods and incorporate fruits, vegetables, and calcium-rich foods like yogurt, broccoli, and milk whenever possible. Limit sweet beverages, including fruit juices, both during and between meals.

5. Getting Regular Dental Checkups
 You should schedule dental checkups and teeth cleaning for your children at least twice a year with a pediatric dentist. A professional cleaning can remove tartar and plaque buildup and monitor

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your child's ongoing oral health. Early detection of issues like cavities can help prevent bigger problems later on.

Leap Before Looking?

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R	A	V	E
A	R	I	A
M	A	L	T
A	W	E	S
D	A	Y	
A	Y	E	

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Improv, cont'd from page 11

tice or performance in Reston. Their next performance is at the Ashburn Senior Center on Saturday Feb. 17 at 7:30 p.m. For those interested in taking Intro to Improv, their next Reston course meets on Tuesdays at 7 p.m. starting on March 5. Check out refleximprov.com to register and for more details. “Come willing to play, have an open mind, it's easier than most people think,” says Brown.

For this article, I attended an Intro to Improv class on Jan. 18, and my personal takeaway was how special it was to see adults coming together to “play” on a Thursday night. It's

not common for adults to have the opportunity to be in a diverse group of their peers and allow themselves to laugh, be silly, get creative. As the class progressed I saw my classmates warm up and the camaraderie was palpable. At the end of class there is a tradition called the “circle of compliments” where students share what impressed them from their fellow classmates, and it was really beautiful to see how people lit up hearing affirmations. As Brown put it, they’ve “never had somebody drop in who didn’t leave and say ‘That was a lot of fun, that wasn’t as scary as I thought it would be!’”

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