

# 'No Kings' Rally Along Route 7 Saturday

March 26 -  
APRIL 1, 2026

FOUNDED  
1991

VOL. XXXVI  
No. 7

# Falls Church News-Press

Northern Virginia's Newspaper

FALLS CHURCH,  
VIRGINIA

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'Democracy Thrives In Sunshine'

## Shields Says He's Leaving in September

F.C. City Manager Also  
Calls for No Tax Rate

BY NICHOLAS F. BENTON  
FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

Falls Church City Manager Wyatt Shields made not one, but two major announcements on back-to-back days this week. The first was his proposed budget for the coming fiscal year that calls for no tax rate change, and the second was the announcement of his plans to retire from his seminal role in the City as of August.

The budget announcement came as little surprise, although concerns expressed by a number of City Council members about the high residential real estate assessments that are included signal that it will be a difficult period between now and when the final budget for the Fiscal Year 2027 (beginning July 1) is adopted.

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## WHAT THE SCHOOLS NEED



FALLS CHURCH SCHOOL BOARD chair Kathleen Tysse (at podium) presents the School Board's budget request to the Falls Church City Council at Monday's Council meeting, with (seated in the front row to the left) Board vice chair Anne Sherwood, chief operating officer Alicia Prince and Superintendent Dr. Terry Dade looking on. (News-Press photo)

## F.C. Chamber Fetes News-Press & Duncan as Pillar

BY NICHOLAS F. BENTON  
FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

As the Falls Church News-Press marks its 35th birthday this weekend, it was honored by the Falls Church Chamber Commerce by being named the winner of its Business of the Year award (small business category) announced last Thursday at the Chamber's annual gala held at the State Theater.

The Chamber's other awards this year included former F.C. City Councilman Phil Duncan as Pillar of the Community for the second time, the Eden Center as large business of the year, Falls Church Arts as non-profit of the year and KiPS Family Gymnastics as Company Culture Excellence award winner.

This marks the latest honor bestowed on the Falls Church News-Press since its founding in

March 1991. In its first year, it was named Business of the Year by the Falls Church City Council. It received the same award again in 2001, upon its 10th anniversary. News-Press founder, owner and editor Nicholas Benton was named recipient of the Chamber's Pillar of the Community award twice in the 1990s and the City's businessman of the year in 2007.

This year, the award bears a

special significance, coming in the context of the demise of newspapers across the U.S. The award recognizes the News-Press as a successful and impactful business within the local economy, which matters because local journalism is often financially fragile, independent papers rarely get recognized alongside restaurants, developers,

Continued on Page 7

2026 Spring  
Home & Real Estate Guide



Pages 9-14

# Holy Week and *Easter* at

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Palm Sunday</b><br>March 29  |   |
| Palm Sunday Liturgy with outdoor procession of palms along East Fairfax Street. <i>Bring your Noise Making Instruments!</i> | 10:00 a.m.                                |
| beginning at the East Fairfax Street entrance to process, continuing in The Historic Church                                 |   |
| <b>Maundy Thursday</b><br>April 2   |   |
| Maundy Thursday Interactive Service with the washing of the feet  | 5:30 p.m.<br>Contemporary Church          |
| Maundy Thursday Liturgy with the washing of feet and procession of the reserved sacrament to the Memorial Chapel            | 7:00 p.m.<br>Historic Church              |
| <b>Good Friday</b><br>April 3   |   |
| Good Friday Liturgy   | 8:00 a.m.<br>Memorial Chapel              |
| Historic Church open for private prayer   | 12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.<br>Historic Church |
| <b>Holy Saturday</b><br>April 4   |   |
| Easter Vigil  | 7:30 p.m.<br>Historic Church              |
| <b>Easter Sunday</b><br>April 5   |   |
| Narrated Resurrection Story & Holy Eucharist<br><i>festive reception to follow in the Parish Hall</i>                       | 9:00 a.m.<br>Contemporary Church          |
| Festal Holy Eucharist<br><i>festive reception to follow in the Parish Hall</i>  | 11:15 a.m.<br>Historic Church             |

[thefallschurch.org](http://thefallschurch.org)

The Falls Church, 115 East Fairfax Street

## FALLS CHURCH BUSINESS NEWS & NOTES

### Toy Nest Turns 6

In celebration of their anniversary, all current Toy Nest members as of midnight, March 31, will be registered to win one of a selection of prizes including Dog Man: The Musical at Capital One Hall, and gift cards from Bakeshop, Scramble and other local businesses. Through March 31, there is also a sale on memberships. Be sure to check the link for details.

### Providence Players Receive Award

Providence Players won the Outstanding Direction Award for Agatha Christie's The Mousetrap at the Washington Area Theatre Community Honors (WATCH). The nominees were announced on January 18 with Providence Players receiving nine. The WATCH Awards Program was held at the Birchmere in Alexandria on Sunday.

### GrillMarx Hosts Oyster Week

GrillMarx is celebrating Chesapeake Oyster Week through the end of March! They have special deals for local oysters on the half shell (\$2 each) and their signature oyster shooters!

### Psychic Saturday

The Center for Spiritual Enlightenment will hold Psychic Saturday this week on Saturday, March 28, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm. Guests may visit the website to learn about the readers participating in the event at <https://www.thecse.org> and register in advance. Participants will have the opportunity to meet with Healers, Mediums, Tarot Card Readers, receive Aura Displays, and Cognomovement. Register in advance or walk in.

### OAR's Zumba Gold Party

The public is invited to a virtual Zumba Gold class hosted by Elizabeth Jones Valderrama, OAR's Executive Director and certified Zumba Instructor. This low-impact, low-intensity class is perfect for all ages and abilities, featuring verbal and hand cues to guide you through the fun. The virtual session will be on Saturday, March 28, 7:30 – 8:30 pm. All proceeds from this event will be directed towards OAR of Arlington, Alexandria, and Falls Church.

### Brunch Crawl

Six Falls Church eateries have teamed up for the first Brunch Crawl. Visit Café Kindred, Preservation Biscuit Co., Ireland's Four Provinces, Borek-G, The Falls and Harvey's on March 29, 10:00 a.m.- 3:00 p.m., and ask for the Brunch Crawl Special. You'll get bites and a beverage for \$10. Plus, you'll do good while eating well: The restaurants will donate 10% of sales from the crawl to Homestretch, which supports people experiencing homelessness.

### Green Grants Open

Keep Virginia Beautiful has opened their 2026 application for Green Grants. Since 2011, the Green Grants program has awarded over \$360,000 in funding to support 445 environmental improvement projects across the state. Thirty awards are funded at \$500, \$750, or \$1,000 in categories like Community Beautification, Recycling and Waste Reduction, and Environmental Education. Applications close April 30th and awards will be announced in June. If a group is awarded a Green Grant, they must complete their project by October 1st. The application guidelines are here: <https://keepvirginiabeautiful.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Green-Grant-Guidelines-2026.pdf> and the application link can be found on the Green Grants webpage: <https://keepvirginiabeautiful.org/programs/30-in-30-green-grants/>

► *Business News & Notes is compiled by Elise Neil Bengtson, Executive Director of the Greater Falls Church Chamber of Commerce. She may be emailed at [elise@fallschurchchamber.org](mailto:elise@fallschurchchamber.org).*

[fcnp.com](http://fcnp.com)



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# F.C. City Manager Announces Departure Plans After 23 Years

Continued from Page 1

Shields' retirement announcement that came on Tuesday, however, was more unexpected. Shields began his career in Falls Church as an assistant city manager to the late Dan McKeever in 2003 and took over, first as interim upon McKeever's death and then as full city manager in 2007.

In a statement from City Hall, it was noted that "since his appointment, Shields has helped guide the City of Falls Church through a period of significant growth and opportunity. Shields worked to strengthen the City's financial position, advance major economic development initiatives, invest in critical infrastructure, and maintain a high standard of responsive, community-centered government services."

Shields added a statement saying, "It has been the honor of my life to serve the City of Falls Church for these past 23 years. I have truly enjoyed the collaboration with our amazing City staff, dedi-

cated community volunteers, and caring and effective City Council," said Shields. "I am grateful for the trust that has been given to me by this community and proud of what we have been able to accomplish together. The City of Falls Church has a bright future."

A statement is also included from Falls Church Mayor Letty Hardi, who said, "Wyatt's leadership has helped shape the City of Falls Church into the vibrant, forward-looking community we are today," said Mayor Letty Hardi. "He has led with integrity, vision, and a genuine dedication to our community. We are deeply grateful for his service and wish him all the best in his well-earned retirement."

In his announcement, Shields indicated a retirement date of September 4, 2026. Pursuant to the City Charter, the City Council will lay out a schedule and process for the recruitment and appointment of a new city manager. A further announcement will be made in the coming days regarding that process.

The City Council held a special meeting early yesterday morning to begin planning out how to find a replacement.

The announcement overshadowed Shields' presentation Monday night of his proposed, Fiscal Year 2027 (FY2027) budget and six-year Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Shields was joined by School Board Chair Kathleen Tysse and Superintendent Terry Dade in the budget presentation to the City Council.

Shields reported that his proposed General Government operating budget (not including debt service) for FY2027 provides for operating expenditures of \$59.5 million — an increase of 3.4 percent over FY2026. The FY2027 transfer to schools from general tax revenues is \$57.8 million — an increase of 4.1 percent over the FY2026 transfer. The total School Division operating budget, including state and federal revenues, is \$71.6 million — a 3.4 percent increase over the FY2026 budget.

Due to decreasing use of capital reserves and decreasing debt service, the overall FY2027 General Fund budget, inclusive of Schools, General Government, and Capital Plan, totals \$134.3 million, a 0.8 percent increase relative to FY2026.

The budget proposes no change to the real estate tax rate of \$1.185 per \$100 of assessed value. The median homeowner's real estate tax bill will increase by \$611 — or 5 percent, owing to the rising assessed value of homes due to market appreciation.

"The proposed budget seeks to provide reliable, responsive, and resilient City services through investment in people and core infrastructure," said Shields.

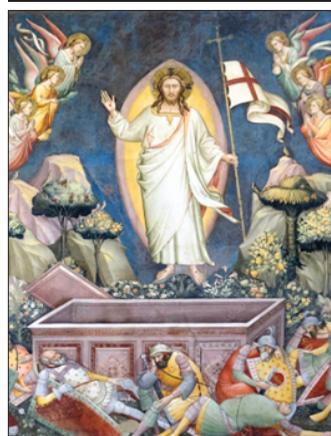
The CIP provides a six-year plan for investment in City roadways, schools, parks, and utilities. Transportation projects total \$100.6 million, City and School Facilities \$7.6 million, Sanitary Sewer \$33.5 million, and Stormwater \$8.7 million. The CIP is funded with \$94.8 million in federal, state, and

regional grants, with \$90 million of that for transportation projects to improve safety and accessibility on City roadways. There is no new taxpayer-funded debt planned in the CIP until FY2031, when \$5 million is planned to replace the roof at the Falls Church Fire Station.

The first of two public town hall sessions to discuss the budget was scheduled for today, March 26, at noon at City Hall.



Wyatt Shields



## Saint James Catholic Church Holy Week 2026



905 Park Avenue Falls Church, Va 22046  
www.StJamesCatholic.org

**MONDAY, MARCH 30**  
6:30-8:00pm Confessions

**TUESDAY, MARCH 31**  
6:30-8:00pm Confessions

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1**  
9:00-11:00am Confessions  
7:00pm Tenebrae  
8:00pm Confessions

**HOLY THURSDAY, APRIL 2**  
7:00pm Mass of the Lord's Supper  
7:00pm Misa de la Cena del Señor  
(gimnasio Knecht)  
Adoration until midnight  
No Confessions

**GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 3**  
9:30-11:30am Confessions  
12:00pm Stations of the Cross  
3:00pm Celebration of the Lord's Passion  
5:00pm Vía Crucis  
6:30pm Veneración de la Cruz

**HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 4**  
9:00am Blessing of the Easter Food  
9:30-11:30am Confessions  
8:00pm Easter Vigil

**EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 5**  
Masses: 7:30am, 9:00am, 10:30am, 12:00pm, & 2:30pm (Español)



# Hands Across Falls Church!

## Saturday, March 28, 10 a.m. - 12 noon



Last October, 2500 of your neighbors lined up on Broad Street, joyfully standing against the would-be king in the White House. *Don't miss your place in history when No Kings sets a new record this Saturday.*

**Help us double our number this time!**

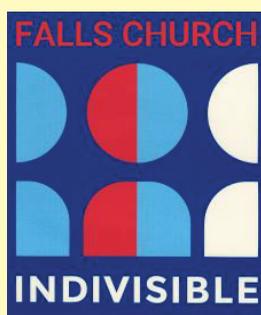
Join us on Broad Street (Rt 7) from Haycock Rd to Roosevelt St with your family, friends, and pets. Let's show that the power of people and communities is stronger than the power of hatred and fear.

- Sign up at [mobilize.us/mobilize/event/904934](https://mobilize.us/mobilize/event/904934)
- Choose your block at [tinyurl.com/HandsAcrossFCBlocks](https://tinyurl.com/HandsAcrossFCBlocks)
  - Democracy Falls Church will be set up at Frady Park
- Enter contests for best signs, best costumes (for people and pets), and best car decorations with prizes donated by Falls Church businesses.
- Bring food for families in need (info e-mailed to registrants)

For details, see: [fallschurchindivisible.org/nk](https://fallschurchindivisible.org/nk)

March 28 is a day, but No Kings is a movement. Join Falls Church Indivisible [fallschurchindivisible.org](https://fallschurchindivisible.org) to keep the momentum going and the resistance growing!

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# Falls Church News-Press

Since 1991, an award-winning LGBT-owned general interest community newspaper.

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- Member, Virginia Press Association

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# EDITORIAL

## News-Press Celebrates 35 Years This Week

This Saturday will mark yet another milestone in the adventure known as the existence of the mighty Falls Church News-Press. It will mark 35 years to the day since that eventful March 28, 1991 evening, when the first ever edition of your newspaper of record came chugging down the rollers of a community printing press in Maryland. The one factor we did not take into account in the rush up to that day was how to get 7,000 copies of that first edition delivered to where a family of distributors were waiting to begin putting them out into the community. We were able to bribe someone hanging out at the printer to deliver other papers to take ours and drop them in Falls Church.

It took months to put together the first ever edition. The next day, after some hours of deep sleep, we (our editor and his sidekick at the time) decided to do the next one for the very next week, and so the unbroken sequence of weekly editions began to this day. A last-minute call out to community leaders for a party in our office that same night was also made. A couple dozen folks showed up for the pizza and conversation. The office then was on the second floor of the same building we now occupy on N. Virginia Ave. In the middle of a night of relentless striving to meet our deadline, as it began to turn light outside, it became evident that the trees outside our window were blossoming, a sure cosmic sign that our work had significance.

We consider the Falls Church Chamber of Commerce's Business of the Year (small business category) received last week as emblematic not only for ourselves, but for the beleaguered newspaper industry in general, everywhere. This is a sign, like those blossoms. Take up the toil, take on the task, do what humanity requires to share community, share aspirations and news through a tactile social medium like a printed newspaper!

There are huge problems to solve at every level of our society. We need to be talking to one another, sharing stories and ideas, not contingent on agreement, but with some core values intact, such as the value of a free press, of democracy, of facts, science and the rule of law. Let the debates go on under those conditions. Society, we believe, will advance under such conditions, not always in a single line, but more generally, to the betterment of us all.

We applaud the service of Falls Church's City Manager Wyatt Shields, having led this community on its transition from little city to Little City, the emphasis on the first word before, and the second word now. This year's budget will be a challenge, but nothing like what Falls Church's neighbors in Arlington and Fairfax are facing.

## PLATFORM

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# Chamber Honors News-Press, Duncan & Others at Gala

Continued from Page 1

or service companies, such that it's a legitimacy boost beyond journalism and its staying power in an era where local journalism is struggling.

In accepting the award, Nicholas Benton said that when the newspaper won Business of the Year in its first year in 1991, at the ceremony he expressed his appreciation but said the award he really wanted was the one given out then by businesses who were celebrating 25 years in business. "That's the one I really want," he said then. He achieved that a decade ago.

In announcing the News-Press as the recipient of this year's award, Chamber Executive Director Elise Bengtson said, "The Falls Church News Press reports on the city government, organizations, leaders, and keeps the community informed. The paper gives us a chance to become participants or even more involved. Now Nick Benton, you and the Falls Church News Press celebrate 35 years of print and the Small Business of the Year Award."

Bengtson announced that the Eden Center was named as the Chamber's Large Business of the Year. She said, "A visit to Eden Center opens cultural doors and welcomes visitors to tastes, smells, and experiences from faraway. We are happy to have the center of the regional Vietnamese community and their descendants in Falls Church."

The Non-Profit of the Year Award was presented to the Falls Church Arts. "Falls Church is home to so many strong nonprofits that do amazing work in the community. I know that many of you volunteer and lead our local nonprofits. Local engagement is an investment in this wonderful community and has truly made a difference in so many lives – and in our Little City. Falls Church Arts is dedicated to fostering creativity, enriching lives, and promoting civic engagement and the Gallery also contributes to the economic health of the Little City."

The "Company Culture Excellence Award" went to KiPS Family Gymnastics. Bengtson said, "When you get to know our businesses, you'll find many that contribute so much personally and professionally to their staff. And the winner this year is KiPS Family Gymnastics. Congratulations!"

"This family-owned and operated business is dedicated to strengthening children and building confidence through high-quality gymnastics programming. They've invested in staff development, facility resources, and community-driven programming demon-

strating a deep commitment to serving Falls Church for the long term," she said.

The Pillar of the Community, the Chambers' highest award, was presented to former Falls Church City Councilman and current Planning Commissioner Phil Duncan. Bengtson said the award "was established in 1967 to recognize Chamber members who are dedicated to family, community, business, or profession and have made a distinctive contribution to the enrichment of life within the Greater Falls Church area." It is the second time Duncan has received this award. He was also given it in 2002, such that he is one of only four persons to win the honor more than once (Donald S. Frady won in 1968 and 1974, Nicholas Benton won in 1993 and 2003 and Barbara Cram in 1999 and 2007).

Bengtson added, "When Phil Duncan left City Council after three terms, he couldn't rest – he was set on continuing to give to the community and he joined the Planning Commission. Phil is also affectionately known as the 'Falls Church City Chronicler' for his lasting and profound impact. His dedication and unwavering support for local commerce and civic engagement have helped shape this city where families thrive, businesses grow, and community spirit flourishes.



**WINNING THE F.C. CHAMBER of Commerce's award as Business of the Year (small business category) was the Falls Church News-Press. News-Press founder, owner and editor in chief Nicholas Benton (center) was on hand to receive the award, presented by executive director Elise Bengtson (right). (Photo: News-Press)**



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# FALLS CHURCH NEWS BRIEFS

## F.C. School Board to Align With State Cell Phone Policy

A policy passed by the Virginia State Legislature that awaits the signature of Gov. Abigail Spanberger calls for a total ban on cell phone use by students from bell to bell.

Tuesday, the Falls Church City Public Schools' School Board, in a work session held at City Hall (all future meetings will be held there instead of at the School Board offices due to security reasons) resolved to align its policy with that of the state. Board member Lori Silverman praised the new state law, that will officially go into effect July 1, noting that Falls Church's two Richmond legislators, Del. Marcus Simon and Sen. Saddam Salim, voted for it.

## N. Va. Lawmakers Speak Out Against Casino Proposal

A proposal that would allow a casino in Tysons is now awaiting action from Virginia Gov. Abigail Spanberger, as Fairfax County leaders urge a veto.

During their March 17 meeting, members of the Board of Supervisors expressed strong concerns about the bill, citing its potential to bypass local land-use authority, limit public input and conflict with long-standing planning for Tysons.

On the other side of the issue, the Fairfax Coalition for Jobs calls for its passage on grounds that, as the county faces a \$300 million budget shortfall, the casino and entertainment center would create 5,000 jobs.

But Fairfax County Board Chair Jeff McKay said the proposal represents a significant departure from how major land-use decisions are typically made in Fairfax County, noting that a version of the bill still under consideration until the final days of the session side-stepped the county entirely.

"This would [have allowed] a casino by right, with no public hearings or public involvement, effectively taking the decision out of the hands of our residents and local elected officials," McKay said. "The idea that Tysons needs a gimmick to succeed is simply not accurate. Places like Tysons are helping fund the state, not the other way around."

Dranesville District Supervisor James Bierman also raised concerns about who would benefit from the proposal and described it as "really sad," saying the people of Fairfax County were sold out by their own.

"This bill was written to benefit a specific developer at the expense of the many," Bierman said. "It's not about generating new revenue for the Commonwealth or the locality. It's about helping a casino developer. And when it comes to casinos, the house always wins."

Providence District Supervisor Dalia Palchik said Tysons does not need a casino to succeed, noting its continued economic strength. She said community sentiment is clear, adding that she has received more than 10,000 pieces of correspondence opposing a casino development.

"Tysons is not in need of rescue," she said. "Its model is successful, forward-looking economic growth. Other localities that have received the power to establish a casino have asked for it — we did no such thing. We have been on defense, and our community has been clear in its opposition."

## STEM Educator Summit Set for April 8 in McLean

The Center for Excellence in Education (CEE), co-Sponsored by Claude Moore Foundation, will host "Inspiring the Next Generation: A STEM Educator Summit" on Saturday, April 18, 2026, from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Courtyard Marriott Tyson's Corner located at 1960-A Chain Bridge Road, McLean, Virginia. This event will offer free professional development and networking for high school STEM educators.

Distinguished guest speakers include Dr. William (Bill) Hazel is a physician, educator, and leader in STEM and workforce development who is CEO of Claude Moore Opportunities. He is a former Virginia Secretary of Health and Human Resources.

Dr. Po-Shen Loh is a professor of mathematics at Carnegie Mellon University, an award-winning educator, and the former coach of the United States International Mathematical Olympiad team. He is recognized for his efforts to make advanced mathematics and problem solving accessible to students and educators.

CEE will be offering attendance certificates for those interested.

## Meridian High Concert Singers Earn Superior Ratings

Falls Church's Meridian High School Concert Choir and Chamber Singers recently represented the school at a state choral assessment. The performance marked the conclusion of a curricular unit focused on the key concept of aesthetics, guided by the school system's Statement of Inquiry: Aesthetics in choral music emerge from the interpretation of genre, serving as a vehicle

for personal expression and the exploration of cultural philosophies.

The Concert Choir's performance of Malakatumba and As I Journey On demonstrated how different genres—the rhythmic complexity of world music and the lyrical phrasing of contemporary choral literature—serve as distinct vehicles for personal expression. By mastering the specific stylistic demands of these genres, the ensemble moved beyond technical accuracy to a higher level of aesthetic interpretation.

Adjudicators praised both ensembles for their vocal blend and artistic interpretation, noting how their technical accuracy and diction allowed the distinct philosophies of each piece to be clearly communicated. Notably, the Superior ratings earned by both the Chamber Singers and the Wind Ensemble have officially secured Blue Ribbon Status for the Meridian performing arts program. This designation is the highest honor a school music department can receive in the state.

## Equality Arlington to Unveil Youth Quilt Project April 8

Equality Arlington invites the public to attend the Arlington Trans Youth Quilt Unveiling and Reception on Wednesday, April 8, at 6 p.m. at Arlington Central Library. The event, co-sponsored by Arlington Public Libraries, will include a short program, video about the making of the quilt, and reception with light refreshments.

The Arlington Trans Youth Quilt includes 54 decorated squares in the middle 6-by-9 grid made by transgender and non-binary youth between the ages of 5 and 19 years old in Arlington County, responding to the prompt "What does Freedom to Be mean to Me?"

This project, organized by Equality Arlington, an LGBTQ+ advocacy nonprofit in Arlington, Virginia, asked youth to anonymously express their identity, joy, and strength at a time of intense political attacks against transgender and non-binary youth and adults.

## Falls Church Arts Scholarship Applications Due April 30

Falls Church Arts is accepting applications through April 30 for its 2026 Excellence in Art Scholarship, a program created to recognize and encourage high school seniors who have shown an early commitment to the arts.

The organization will award a limited number of \$1,000 scholarships to students in the final year of secondary school at a Northern Virginia high school who plan to attend an accredited post-secondary institution and continue their artistic pursuits.

Eligible students must demonstrate excellence and creativity in visual arts fields including drawing, painting, photography, mixed media, or sculpture. Special consideration will be given to applicants whose artwork and activities have benefited fellow students, their school, or the broader community.

Applicants must submit five images of their work, an artist statement, a recommendation from an art instructor, a general recommendation from a non-family adult, and a transcript. Applications, official transcripts, and recommendations must be received by April 30, 2026, at Falls Church Arts, Attn: Scholarship Committee, P.O. Box 6912, Falls Church, VA 22040-6912.

More information on the application process is available at Falls Church Arts' website. For additional information, contact Maureen Budetti at 202-288-9291 or Marty Behr at 703-975-0762.



**HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT** participants in Wesley Diener's WD Studio Core Program, a year-long training experience fostering artistry, community, and musical excellence, performed show tunes in a special cabaret at the Creative Cauldron Sunday night. Charlotte Abney, Anisha Freilich, Antoinette Katsas, Michaela Harten, Amalie Hendericks, Emma Howell, Emersyn Moskal, Vannie Nugent, Ella Onur and Jack Wielar performed. (Photo: News-Press)

# 2026 Home & Real Estate Spring Guide



## Pages 9-14

### Meet Your Home Experts

*A Falls Church News-Press Advertorial*

#### Albert Bitici - The Bitici Group at KW Metro Center

The spring market has arrived, bringing fresh energy and renewed momentum to the real estate landscape.



New buyers are entering with confidence, while many buyers from last year - who paused their search due to uncertainty - are back and ready to move. As demand strengthens and competition increases, we're seeing the scales tip once again in favor of sellers. In this evolving landscape, success hinges on smart positioning, precise pricing, and a strategic marketing plan designed to maximize value. If you've been considering selling, now is the time to have a focused conversation about your goals and opportunities. Let's discuss a winning selling strategy and position your home to stand out in today's market.

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#### Bethany Ellis - Long & Foster

Hi, I'm Bethany...



With two decades of experience in the real estate industry, I am committed to providing my clients with the highest level of service and expertise. My journey as a real estate agent has been driven by a passion for helping people find their dream homes and make sound investments. Honesty and integrity are the cornerstones of my practice. I believe in building strong, lasting relationships with my clients based on trust and open communication. My deep knowledge of the local market allows me to guide you through every step of the buying or selling process with confidence and clarity. I take pride in going above and beyond to ensure my clients' needs are met. Whether you're a first-time homebuyer, looking to sell, or seeking an investment property, I am here to provide personalized support tailored to your unique situation. My dedication to your success is unwavering, and I am always ready to advocate for your best interests. Let's work together to turn your real estate goals into reality!

703.307.7003 • [bethany.ellis@LNF.com](mailto:bethany.ellis@LNF.com)

#### Miller & Smith



Beacon Park by Miller & Smith offers a fresh take on modern living in the scenic Belmont Bay community of Woodbridge. Featuring stylish new 4-level townhomes with roof top terrace, the community offers functional designed homes and connect lifestyle near the Occoquan River. Now open, the new Marbella model is a must-see—showcasing open, light-filled spaces, flexible living, and a private rooftop terrace. Visit today and meet Sales Manager Debora Flora and her team to experience a place that truly feels like home.

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#### Kathy Pippin - Kathy Pippin Properties

Kathy Pippin is a top-producing Northern Virginia Realtor® and Certified Business Coach with Samson Properties, recognized for her elevated service, market expertise, and results-driven approach. With more than \$100 million in career sales, she has built Kathy Pippin Properties on trust, credibility, and excellence. She serves clients across Falls Church, McLean, and the greater DMV, specializing in residential sales, commercial, rentals, renovation opportunities, and maximizing a property's value and appeal. Kathy is also passionate about mentoring and coaching, helping agents and professionals grow with confidence and strategy. In today's market, she advises clients to prioritize pricing, presentation, and thoughtful improvements that set a home apart.



TRUST. CREDIBILITY. EXCELLENCE. Call or Text Kathy Pippin

703.408.0838

#### ROCK STAR realty group

Tori McKinney & ROCK STAR realty group - Your Trusted Advisor for Home Buying & Selling.



Spring is when many are considering their next move. And life's biggest moments require a trusted advocate by your side. Buying or selling a home is no exception.

I'm Tori McKinney, CEO and Realtor® with ROCK STAR realty group. For over 20 years, I've guided buyers and sellers through one of life's most important decisions. As a 28-year resident of Falls Church, I know this community deeply and understand how to advocate for you with clarity and confidence.

Are you a first-time buyer feeling overwhelmed? A seller wondering how to position their home for success? I'm here to guide you through every step, ensuring your needs are met and your interests are protected.

Real estate can feel complicated. But with a trusted advocate who understands the current market and your unique situation, you can move forward with confidence.

Got real estate questions? We've got answers. Let's chat over coffee... about your next move. Stop by ROCK the House—Wednesdays, 10–11 AM at Northside Social.

703.867.8674 • [Tori@ROCKSTARrealtygroup.com](mailto:Tori@ROCKSTARrealtygroup.com) • [ROCKSTARrealtygroup.com](http://ROCKSTARrealtygroup.com)

#### Kelly Millspaugh Thompson - Concierge Real Estate Services

As a Falls Church City native and small business owner Kelly strives to make buying and selling less overwhelming for her clients. Kelly opened STYLISH PATINA her Home+Gift shop in 2012 and has been a licensed Realtor since 2019. She has been recognized as a Platinum Producer by NVAR and Top Producer by Arlington Magazine.



Kelly is known for her cutting edge marketing, business savvy and concierge approach to Real Estate. She and her team are able to manage all aspects of buying and selling a home: home prep, liquidation, organization, renovation, moving, and design. This has proven to be a unique and highly sought after combination of skills. Kelly has a passion for helping folks as they transition through life stages - needing a larger home for a growing family or downsizing. Kelly is a mother of 5 and understands the stress of moving with children and the overwhelm of transitioning out of a home you raised your family in when it comes time to simplify. These big life transitions are where she finds the most joy in helping families. If you are looking for a Realtor with compassion and commitment to making your next Real Estate transaction less stressful contact Kelly.

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Right now, we have exciting off-market opportunities: multiple luxury homes under construction and available for sale in the City of Falls Church & the Haycock School Pyramid—ideal for this spring buying season. We also have select off-market lot opportunities for those seeking prime build sites. Don't miss these exclusive new-build options! Contact us to learn more!



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# Real Estate

## JANUARY 1 - MARCH 15, 2025

## TOP 5 F.C. HOME SALES

1. 6220 LAKEVIEW DR, FALLS CHURCH, VA 22041 • 2. 1852 GRIFFITH RD, FALLS CHURCH, VA 22043  
3. 812 FULTON AVE, FALLS CHURCH, VA 22046 • 4. 1910 CHERRI DR, FALLS CHURCH, VA 22043 • 5. 7703 LUNCEFORD LN, FALLS CHURCH, VA 22043



#1 \$2,330,000



#2 \$2,330,000



#3 \$2,250,000



#4 \$2,220,000



#5 \$2,199,000

### THINKING ABOUT SELLING OR BUYING IN 2026?

Call, text or email Bethany for a free and confidential consultation.

UNDER CONTRACT



7616 Wood Mist Lane  
Falls Church VA 22043  
\$515,000

UNDER CONTRACT



WestLee Condo  
2200 N Westmoreland St. #415  
Arlington VA 22213  
\$445,000

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I have buyers looking for a 2BR condo in the Spectrum.



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at Haycock ES  
Westmoreland St. Parking Lot



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## Bethany Ellis

REALTOR®, Associate Broker  
SRES, E-PRO, CRS, Relocation Specialist  
Licensed in VA & DC  
C: 703-307-7003  
O: 703-790-1990  
E: Bethany.Ellis@LongandFoster.com  
W: www.BuyandSellwithBethany.com



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MCLEAN, VA 22101

# Spring Market is in Bloom



## FALLS CHURCH MARKET UPDATE

JAN - MAR 2026

**18**

HOMES  
SOLD

**\$1,030,340**

AVG SOLD  
PRICE

**28**

AVG DAYS  
ON MARKET

**33%**

SOLD OVER  
LIST PRICE

SOURCE: BRIGHT MLS

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### FOR OUR SELLERS

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- ✓ Strategic Pricing
- ✓ Targeted Marketing
- ✓ Expert Negotiating



### FOR OUR BUYERS

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- ✓ Determine Buying Power
- ✓ Identify Right Home
- ✓ Strategize Winning Offers



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PENDING

**SLEEPY HOLLOW, FALLS CHURCH**  
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 3 BATHS ♀ HALF ACRE



SOLD - \$1,200,000

**LAKE BARCROFT, FALLS CHURCH**  
 3 BEDS ★ BEACH ACCESS  
 3 BATHS ♀ MATURE TREES



SOLD - \$900,000

**ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA**  
 5 BEDS ★ CORNER LOT  
 3 BATHS ♀ .RENOVATED



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**Kathy Pippin, Realtor**

**Website:** KathyPippinProperties.com

**Email:** Kathy@Kathypippinproperties.com

**Call/Text:** 703-408-0838



# Be Ready. Get Ready. Home Buyer's Guide to Spring Success

BY TORI MCKINNEY

Spring has sprung, and so has the Northern Virginia real estate market! Homes are selling quickly, and buyer competition is real. Despite fluctuating interest rates and ongoing economic changes, Falls Church and the surrounding areas remain highly competitive. For buyers ready to make a move, the window is narrow. Those who wait to prepare often miss out. But here's the good news: you don't have to be caught off guard. There are three critical decisions to make before you set foot into an open house.

### 1. Decide to Buy (and Commit to It)

This sounds simple, but it requires genuine commitment from everyone involved. Are you ready to move? Is your family aligned on this decision? Does your life situation support a purchase right now?

Buying a home is one of life's biggest decisions. It requires mental clarity, emotional readiness, and agreement across your household. Before you start touring homes, make sure everyone is truly ready to take this step.

### 2. Decide Where to Buy (and Define Your Priorities)

Once you're committed, get clear on where you want to live and what's important to you: a specific school district, outdoor space, or community feel? Break it down into three categories of priorities:

- **Must-haves:** These are your non-negotiable features (such as number of bedrooms, proximity to work, or a specific lifestyle like walkability)
- **Nice-to-haves:** Features you'd love but could live without (such as hardwood floors, a large deck, or an updated kitchen)
- **Deal-breakers:** Conditions that would make you walk away (such as proximity to a highway, foundation issues, or being located in a flood zone)

Having these priorities clearly defined keeps you focused during your search. In a competitive market, knowing what you truly need versus what's negotiable keeps

you from getting emotional or overpaying for features that don't align with your goals.

### 3. Decide on Your Budget (and Know Your Numbers)

This is where preparation separates ready buyers from the rest. Understanding your budget isn't just about the mortgage payment; it's about your complete financial picture. This seems like a lot of work. Honestly, it is. But this is one of the most important steps you can take. Start with simple mortgage calculators to get a ballpark figure, then use that information when you meet with a lender to get your pre-approval letter and discuss your complete financial picture. Here's what to consider:

- Your available down payment
- Closing costs and associated fees
- Property taxes and homeowners insurance
- HOA fees (if applicable)
- Maintenance and repair reserves
- Utilities and lifestyle costs

According to recent data from the National Association of Realtors® (March 2026), many buyers underestimate their true monthly housing costs by 15-20%. Getting your full financial picture and documentation in order is crucial.

Why? When you find the right home in this fast-moving market, sellers are choosing between multiple offers. A buyer with documentation ready, a pre-approval letter in hand, and strong financial spending power has a significant advantage. You'll be able to move quickly and confidently, showing sellers you're serious and ready to close.

### Your Real Estate Team is Your Advocate

Once you've made these three decisions, you're ready. Your real estate team will be by your side as your trusted advocate, helping you navigate inspections, negotiations, and the closing process. But the foundation of success starts with you being ready before the search even begins.

Spring is here. The market is moving fast: Be ready. Get ready. Preparation isn't just smart, it's essential.

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**BY  
MILLER  
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**Miller & Smith.**

# Average Price: 1Q '26

**\$1,363,750**

Falls Church City (22046)

**\$1,078,215**

Bailey's X-roads (22041)

**\$936,978**

Sleepy Hollow (22042)

**\$1,510,864**

Pimmit Hills (22043)

**\$1,120,174**

Lake Barcroft (22044)

# Days on the Market

**19**

Falls Church City (22046)

**30**

Bailey's X-roads (22041)

**28**

Sleepy Hollow (22042)

**55**

Pimmit Hills (22043)

**14**

Lake Barcroft (22044)



## Homes For Sale!



1104 N Tuckahoe St. Falls Church City  
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300 Poplar Dr. Falls Church City  
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# Thiel, Yarvin & the MAGA Movement Beyond Trump

NICHOLAS F. BENTON

FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

What will the MAGA movement be like without Trump, come whatever point he is removed from the picture?



It is an important question because it is exactly what we will be facing going forward. If we think that simply doing away with Trump is going to solve America's problems, then a sobering look at the philosophical and ideological structure undergirding his movement should give real pause.

It is more than just Naziism 2.0 or fascist. That's the simple and inadequate explanation. Just like the nation's reaction to Sputnik in the 1950s, it is going to take a massive socio-cultural redo to fix the problems that have been festering for many, many years.

OK, here's a stab at what we're looking at in 2026 terms. Take the ideological bent of Silicon Valley billionaire Peter Thiel, whose Palantir company is on the verge of rewiring the entire internal security systems of the U.S. defense establishment.

Thiel spent years of his childhood in Swakopmund, a deeply Nazi German-infused resort town on the west coast of southern Africa in Namibia, where "Heil Hitler" is still a normal form of greeting among the town's 25,000 residents.

Since attending Stanford University Thiel has become a protege of the overtly anti-democratic views of Curtis Guy Yarvin, known by the pen name Menclous Moldbug, a far-right political blogger and software developer. Yarvin is known, along with Nick Land, for founding the anti-democratic philosophical movement known as the Dark Enlightenment, or the "neo-reactionary movement." He is also aligned with the "pick up artists" movement of white males begun back in the 1960s focused on honing skills in the art of seduction.

The fact of Thiel's close relationship with the late convicted sex-trafficker Jeffrey Epstein, documented in myriad ways by email exchanges exposed in many of the Epstein files released by the Justice Department,

may be connected to this "art of the seduction" movement and takes on even greater significance when the fact of Thiel's homosexuality is taken into account.

But the Epstein story is not my primary concern here. Much more important is the ideological underpinnings of the MAGA movement that we will still be having to take on when Trump is gone.

Of particular interest to me is the relationship of Yarvin, Land and Thiel's ideas to the philosophical systems developed by the late French philosopher Michel Foucault. Foucault, according to Google Scholar, has far more citations on the Internet than any other philosopher. He's known as a highly influential proponent of postmodernist thought.

Now, postmodernism is where the idea that there is no such thing as objective reality comes from (a big part of MAGA advocacy). It allows for promulgating the assertion that any election which you did not win was fixed, objective data be damned.

The scholastic world falsely labels Foucault as a leftist. He was a Nazi leftist, because his radical views wrote out of history the role of any motives for human behavior other than the pursuits of power and pleasure. Notions such as, heaven forbid!, love, brotherhood or solidarity are considered mere naive adolescent misgivances.

That power and pleasure are the only real players in human behavior is now taken as such a given in modern thought that it is hardly even noticed now. It led to the framework that Yarvin has used for his right-wing, anti-democratic thinking. It came from Foucault.

When, in San Francisco, I was advancing my own theories to build the post-Stonewall LGBT movement in the 1970s into a constructive non-conformist way of shaping a positive social future overall, little did I know then that my main adversary was lecturing to thousands of students across the bay at U.C. Berkeley, Mr. Foucault.

He was advancing power-pleasure theories applied to sexual behavior, advocating the idea that the only thing really "new" about gay liberation was the sexual act of fisting, leading to a proliferation of that behavior in the gay bathhouses in San Francisco, which apparently he was also personally frequenting almost every night.



## A Penny for Your Thoughts

By Penny Gross

Former Fairfax County Supervisor

It's probably safe to say that no other nation in the world has as many diverse faiths and religious beliefs as America. That should be a strength, not a weakness. Religious freedom is a founding principle of our Constitution, but it appears that many people, including some elected leaders, are centering that freedom on a certain faith instead of applying it to all faiths. When members of Congress proclaim that "Muslims don't belong in American society," or that Islam is not compatible with western society (as a GOP campaign noted in a recent Washington Post article), they are demagoguing and scapegoating millions of people, not just American citizens but residents of nations around the world. Switch out the word Muslim for Jew, Catholic, Christian, Buddhist, Sikh, Hindu, etc., pinpoints the hatred and bias that have bedeviled human society for millennia. There should be some common ground. The tenets of the great world religions preach love and respect for the name of the Supreme Being -- God, Allah, Yahweh, and more -- as well as loving your neighbor as yourself. Sounds simple in theory, but

when politics and culture overlay faith, practice can become more difficult and complex.

Fortunately, not always. Sometimes religion, politics, culture, art, and community can come together to create new friends, new understandings, and new appreciation for what previously might have been viewed as differences. Last weekend, a Nowruz celebration, hosted by ArtLords and John Calvin Presbyterian Church in Annandale, did exactly that. Nowruz, meaning "new day," is a celebration of the Persian New Year and the arrival of spring, observed for more than three millennia across Central and South Asia, the Middle East and the global diaspora. It symbolizes renewal, hope, and new beginnings and can feature music, food, painting, calligraphy, and storytelling. ArtLords is an international collective of artists and cultural activists that uses public art, murals, and stories to promote peace, justice, and human dignity. John Calvin Presbyterian Church is a welcoming faith community dedicated to service, compassion, and building bridges across cultures. The walls of the fellowship hall displayed precious antique Afghani minia-

ture paintings, modern art by local artists, and a large mural of a smiling young girl waving a bouquet of red flowers that was painted on site by attendees.

Reflecting the "new day" of those who celebrate Nowruz, little girls were dressed in colorful native costumes bedecked with gold and silver decorations. Little boys wore crisp suits or tunics over flowing trousers. Adults wore traditional garb, and there were lots of hugs as old friends greeted one another, and new friends got acquainted. The role of community partnerships, and the importance of empathy and solidarity in today's world were themes of the celebration, which also toasted the beginning of the ArtLords-John Calvin Presbyterian collaboration. There was little mention of hostilities against Iran, or elsewhere in the Middle East, but some comments alluded to concerns about family and friends who might be in danger halfway across the world.

There were no spiteful comments, no withering side-eye glances, no blame games, just 150 people from diverse backgrounds celebrating the renewal of spring and the empathy and delight in being together that makes us human. Understanding our differences and focusing on our similarities can be a recipe for respect, tolerance, and inclusion that moves America forward rather than the bitter taste of rancor and division that holds it back. Tell that to members of Congress!

## CITY OF FALLS CHURCH CRIME REPORT

Week of  
March 9 - 15, 2026

Fraud – False Pretenses, E Broad St, Mar 17, 2:18 p.m., victim reported sending money to an unknown suspect claiming to be a law enforcement officer with a warrant for their arrest.

Robbery, Wilson Blvd, Mar 17, 2:27 p.m., an unknown suspect snatched a necklace from the victim's neck. The suspect is described as a Hispanic male with a larger build and beard, approximately 5'7"-5'10" in height, approximately 175-180 pounds in weight, and wearing a black shirt.

Prescription Fraud, W Broad St, Mar 17, 2:30 p.m., a report of prescription fraud was taken.

Threats, S Lee St, Mar 17, 7:20 p.m., victim reported an unknown suspect threatened to harm them over a financial dispute.

Shoplifting, Wilson Blvd, Mar 18, 12:49 p.m., two unknown suspects stole merchandise.

Identity Theft, W Broad St, Mar 18, 4:23 p.m., a male, 31, of Burke, was arrested for Identity Fraud, Identity Theft, and Obstruction of Justice.

If you're looking to connect directly with the Falls Church community, the Falls Church News-Press offers one of the most trusted and effective local platforms to share your message.

Our readers are engaged, loyal, and invested in supporting local businesses. Whether you're promoting a service, event, or special offer, advertising with us puts you in front of the people who matter most—your neighbors.

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**CLASSIFIEDS**

**LEGAL NOTICE**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

The Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) of the City of Falls Church, Virginia will hold a public hearing on April 9, 2026, at 7:30 PM in the Council Chambers, located at 300 Park Avenue, for consideration of the following items:

-Variance application V1675-26 by Joel Jermakian, (Applicant and Owner), for a variance to Section 48-238(3)(a) to allow a rear yard setback of 24.17 feet instead of the 40 feet minimum to construct a proposed 16 feet by 18 feet screened-in porch at 303 E. Broad Street, RPC#53-117-033 of the Falls Church Real Property Records, zoned R-1A, Low Density Residential District, continued from the February 12, 2026, BZA meeting by the applicant.

-Variance application V1676-26 by Stephen and Toby Hedger, (Applicants and Owners), for a variance to Sec. 48-238(3)(a) to allow a front yard setback of 24 feet instead of the 30 feet minimum allowed along Hillier Street to construct a sunroom and foundation at 116 South Oak Street, RPC#52-206-048 of the Falls Church Real Property Records, zoned R-1A, Low Density Residential District.

- Variance application V1677-26 by Andrew and Virginia Wright, (Applicants and Owners) for a variance to Sec. 48-263(3)(a) to allow a side yard setback of 9 feet instead of the 10 feet minimum allowed to construct a rear covered porch at 928 North Quesada Street, RPC#53-218-034 of the Falls Church Real Property Records, zoned R-1B, Medium Density Residential.

- Variance application V1678-26 by Michael and Molly Novotny, (Applicants and Owners) for a variance to Sec. 48-238(3)(a) to allow a side yard setback of 3.5 feet instead of the 10 feet minimum allowed to reconstruct an addition at 319 N. Maple Avenue, RPC#51-108-039 of the Falls Church Real Property Records, zoned R-1A, Low Density Residential.

Public comment and questions may be submitted to zoning@fallschurchva.gov until 4:30 pm on April 9, 2026. Agenda and application materials will be available the week prior to the scheduled hearing at: <http://www.fallschurchva.gov/BZA>

Information on the above application is also available for review upon request to staff at zoning@fallschurchva.gov.

**CEMETERY PLOTS FOR SALE**

1-4 cemetery plots in National Memorial Park in Falls Church Virginia. Beautiful cemetery with a serene, quiet location for these plots. \$5995 each. Contact information: Richard Honaker 214-532-1420 Honaker@aol.com

Two funeral lots for sale at National Memorial Park, Valued at \$15,000. Best offer. 301-938-9806.

Two double depth lawn crypts in National Memorial Park in Falls Church Virginia. Located in beautiful Garden of Belvedere row South lots A,B@C,D. \$15,000 per double depth crypt. call 540-222-4205

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# This Week Around Falls Church

## Thurs, March 26

**City Manager's Budget Town Hall #1**  
12:00–1:00 p.m.  
Dogwood Room A and B, City Hall, 300 Park Ave.  
Community budget town hall.

**English Conversation Practice**  
2:00–4:00 p.m.  
George Mason Regional Library  
Conversation practice session.

**Training on the Virginia Freedom of Information Act for Staff, City Council, and City Boards**  
2:30–3:30 p.m.  
Council Chambers/Court Room, City Hall  
Training session on the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

**Historical Commission Meeting**  
7:00–9:00 p.m.  
City Hall, Dogwood Room A and B  
Cancelled.

**Thursday Night Sporecle Pub Quiz**  
7:00–9:00 p.m.  
Clare and Don's  
Weekly trivia night.

**Brain Fitness Time**  
2:00–3:00 p.m.  
George Mason Regional Library  
Library program.

**Dan & Chuck**  
5:30 p.m.  
Clare and Don's  
Live music.

## Fri, March 27

**The Warped Tour Band: A Tribute to Emo/Pop-Punk**  
8:30 p.m.  
The State Theatre

## Sat, March 28

**Falls Church Farmers Market**  
9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.  
City Hall Parking Lot  
Shop the award-winning market every Saturday, year-round.

**No Kings "Hands Across Falls Church"**  
10:00 a.m.–12:00 noon  
The entire length of Broad Street (Route 7) between Roosevelt Street and Haycock Road  
Line up on any block with your signs and costumes and say, "No Kings in America!" Contests include Best Signs, Best Costumes for people and dogs, and Best Decorated Cars. Register and see contest details and prizes at fallschurchindivisible.org/nk.

**Spring Has Sprung Saturday Storytime**  
10:30–11:30 a.m.  
George Mason Regional Library  
Library storytime program.

**Scrap to Stamp**  
12:00–2:00 p.m.  
Roberts Park  
Community activity.

**Unveiling of the Dr. Edwin B. Henderson Portrait**  
1:00–2:00 p.m.  
Falls Church Community Center, E.B. Henderson Gymnasium, 223 Little Falls St., Falls Church, VA 22046  
Free event.

**Lecture: Willa Cather and the Story Behind Death Comes for the Archbishop**  
2:00–3:00 p.m.  
Mary Riley Styles Public Library, Main Level Conference Room

High school students (grades 9–12) and adults (ages 18+). Program type: Author Talk & Literary Event, Community & Culture. Registration required. To register, scroll down and click the blue "Register"

box. Many library programs and services are supported by the MRSPL Foundation. Learn more at [mrsplfoundation.org](http://mrsplfoundation.org).

## Sun, March 29

**Falls Church City Brunch Crawl**  
10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.  
Participating venues: Ireland's Four Provinces, Harvey's, Borek-G, Preservation Biscuit Company, The Falls, and Cafe Kindred  
Visit six local independent restaurants for a brunch crawl featuring a \$10 mini-meal and drink special with a passport. Pick up a passport at any participating location, get it stamped along the way, and enjoy the crawl. Benefits Homestretch.

**LEGO Fun Time**  
2:00–3:00 p.m.  
George Mason Regional Library  
Library activity.

**Shack Style Drag Bingo**  
8:30–11:30 p.m.  
Clare and Don's  
Doors open at 8:00 p.m.

## Mon, March 30

**Kid Craft: Glass Gem Magnets**  
2:00–3:15 p.m.  
George Mason Regional Library  
Children's craft program.

## Tues, March 31

**Toddler Storytime**  
10:30–11:00 a.m.  
George Mason Regional Library  
Library storytime.

**English Conversation Practice**  
2:00–4:00 p.m.  
George Mason Regional Library  
Conversation practice session.

## Tuesday, March 31

**Cancer Connections**  
7:00–8:00 p.m.  
George Mason Regional Library  
Support and information program.

**AARP Workshop: Sorting Fact from Fiction Online**  
6:30–7:30 p.m.  
Mary Riley Styles Public Library, Main Level  
Registration is required for this event.

## Weds, April 1

**Preschool Storytime**  
10:30–11:00 a.m.  
George Mason Regional Library  
Library storytime.

**Technology Tutoring**  
2:00–3:00 p.m.  
George Mason Regional Library

Have Events?

Send us an email to [calendar@fcnp.com](mailto:calendar@fcnp.com)

### Upcoming Issues

4/2

Easter Edition :  
Brunch, Religious Services

4/9

Camps & Schools

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| MAR 27 | WARPED TOUR BAND EMO POP PUNK NIGHT          |
| MAR 28 | SELENA QUINTANILLA TRIBUTE                   |
| APR 03 | CHRISTOPHER TITUS                            |
| APR 04 | THE LEGWARMERS LIVE 80S RETRO PARTY          |
| APR 10 | SOUTHERN ACCENTS TOM PETTY TRIBUTE           |
| APR 11 | GRATEFUL DUB REGGAE INFUSED GRATEFUL DEAD    |
| APR 17 | 5 DOLLAR COMEDY NIGHT                        |
| APR 18 | POLICE CARS TRIBUTE TO THE POLICE & THE CARS |
| APR 24 | ALMOST QUEEN TRIBUTE TO QUEEN                |
| APR 25 | SHOT THRU THE HEART BON JOVI TRIBUTE         |

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# Meridian Spring Sports Hit the Ground Running With Strong Start

BY RYAN McCAFFERTY

Spring sports are underway at Meridian High, and Mustang supporters can expect another season full of success from at least several of the school's proud programs. Let's take a look at how each of them fared in Week 1.

Girls lacrosse opened their season with a pair of wins against Class 4 opponents in John Champe last Tuesday and Broad Run last Wednesday, beating the former 14-3 on the road and the latter 16-0 at home. The boys' only contest was a 12-8 home win over Charles J. Colgan on Thursday, and they'll stay in Falls Church to take on John Champe today.

Boys soccer went on the road to beat Rock Ridge 3-1 on Thursday in new head coach Ronald Cruz's debut, while the girls beat North Stafford 7-0 at home last Tuesday and Rock Ridge 2-0 on the road on Thursday. This week they'll play at

Dominion today.

Baseball opened with a pair of losses, falling 7-4 at Fauquier on Thursday and then losing 8-2 at Washington-Liberty over the weekend. They'll hit the road again to visit Kettle Run today, in conjunction with the softball team. The girls lost 18-1 at Fauquier on Thursday for their only action of the season thus far.

On the tennis court, the boys beat Fauquier 6-3 on the road Thursday while the girls swept the same opponent 9-0 at home. Both teams will now face Millbrook and Kettle Run this week, the boys on the road and the girls at home.

Finally, the starting gun fired for track and field at the Battlefield Relays this past weekend, with both squads finishing in seventh place while the boys' Spring Medley Relay team set a school record. They'll now travel to Manassas Park this week.



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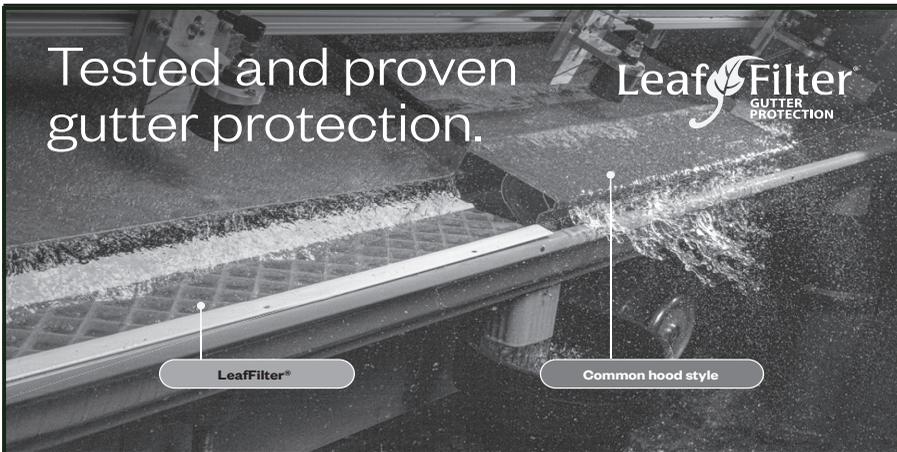
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## 'Reminders of Him' Review

BY LISA SINROD

This film, released nationally on March 13 and rated PG-13, is no more and no less than one would expect from an adaptation of a Colleen Hoover novel. The bestselling author has published over 20 contemporary romance novels and novellas since 2012. If you like her stories, bring your tissues and expect a reasonably well-acted tear jerker that may absorb you for the nearly two-hour ride. If you don't like schmaltzy romantic dramas combined with some suspension of disbelief, you may want to pass on this one. Some will refer to the film as a "chick flick", so consider yourself warned - despite the reductive nature of that term. I generally enjoyed the film, though my familiarity with Hoover's emotionally driven, escapist fiction likely enhanced the experience.

Directed by Vanessa Caswill (known for directing other romantic dramas such as "Love at First Sight"), the plot centers around a young woman who was recently released from serving several years in prison due to a tragic mistake. Kenna, portrayed authentically by Maika Monroe, was the driver in a crash which killed Scotty, her boyfriend. She learns in prison that she is pregnant with his child. After the birth, she is not allowed to see the baby, at which time Scotty's parents take court-ordered custody. What follows is an emotional family story as Kenna returns to a small town in Wyoming, determined to rebuild her life, find work, and earn a place in her young daughter's world.

Monroe delivers a compelling performance in the lead role, elevating what would likely otherwise be merely a lightweight and overly sentimental film. The somewhat lackluster performances of the other key players accentuate Monroe's talent. The 33-year-old actress and former professional kiteboarder grew up in Southern California and has mostly built her acting career around psychological thrillers. Her believable, deeply human portrayal of

Kenna anchors the film, drawing the audience into the characters and their emotional stakes. Tyriq Withers portrays Ledger, a former NFL football player and now a bar owner, who was Scotty's best friend. He is loyal and is a father figure to the little girl who would have been Scotty's child had he lived. Kenna approaches Ledger in efforts to get to know the child, at which point things become complicated. Withers (who has primarily performed in television roles) gives a steady yet muted performance as he navigates his goals to protect the child, honor Scotty's memory and help Kenna. "Reminders of Him" is Withers' entry into feature films and it is unclear whether flaws in the script or his acting style prevent Withers' character from coming fully to life.

There is an odd lack of chemistry between Monroe's character and Withers' character, as they begin to connect emotionally and romantically during the film's progression. Both key actors appear to make great efforts to present Kenna and Ledger onscreen, and yet the engine that tends to drive dramas written by Colleen Hoover doesn't seem to fully depart the station. The script is short on meaningful conversation between Kenna and Ledger beyond their simple proximity after Ledger offers Kenna a job at his bar. More dialogue is needed to connect the dots and provide a better understanding of their complex relationship. All is not lost, however, as interesting things happen and many touching moments occur while Kenna continues to seek out a relationship with the little girl she gave birth to. We also learn more about what actually happened on the fateful day of the car crash which killed Scotty. The film is one of several movie adaptations of a Hoover novel, including "It Ends With Us" and "Verity". Hoover co-wrote the movie screenplay and also served as a producer for this film. If you are a Hoover fan, I'd rate "Reminders of Him" as a B-minus for you. If you don't already have an affinity for Hoover's storytelling, a C rating is likely the more fitting assessment.

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## Our Man In Arlington

BILL FOGARTY

What is the oldest road in Arlington County? Some may say Glebe Road, which dates back to the 1700s, as a "road to the falls" that connected the port of Alexandria to the falls of the Potomac River (connecting one part of the river with another). Another road from that century was the Georgetown-to-Falls Church Road (which is now Wilson Boulevard). But I would venture to say that the oldest thoroughfare is Columbia Pike. The location of "the Pike," as it is commonly referred to, served as a trail centuries ago for the Indigenous people living in this area. As described in a 1989 Arlington Historical Society magazine article by Sara Collins and Ruth Stewart, this path served as high ground where travelers "... could overlook the surrounding territory and watch for enemies."

Columbia Pike gets its name from the Columbia Turnpike Co., which was chartered in 1808 to build an east-west toll road starting from the Long Bridge (in the area of today's 14th Street bridges). The road connected to the north-south road known as Little River Turnpike in Fairfax County. In providing a charter to the turnpike company, the Virginia General Assembly had specific requirements as to width and composition of the road: to be at least 60 feet wide, 18 feet of which "shall be well covered with gravel or stone." Travelers would have to pay a toll at designated points along the way, with pikes (long sticks) blocking the way.

Columbia Pike stopped being a toll road in the early 1900s. With the emergence of the automobile as the main mode of transportation, Columbia Pike became a vital thoroughfare in the county in the early 20th century, with businesses, churches and residential subdivisions springing up along "the Pike." One of those subdivisions, now known as the Penrose neighborhood, was the subject of a laudatory article in The Washington Post earlier this year.

All of this is a roundabout way of getting to my main goal in today's column, which

is to give a shoutout to the fine work of the Columbia Pike Partnership. Arlington County has a long history of assisting specific geographic areas with dedicated resources intended to address specific needs. There are various models of assistance, such as business improvement districts, known as BIDs. The Columbia Pike Partnership is a different type of model, with strong participation by businesses and residents. In 1986, the Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization was created, with the help of the county, which recognized the need for revitalization of the area. The organization, now called the Columbia Pike Partnership, has had a recent rebranding that proclaims, "We are the Pike."

One of the outstanding accomplishments of the Columbia Pike Partnership is the Columbia Pike Documentary Project, which is a long-term, multidisciplinary effort started in 2007 to document the diverse community that has been described as "the world in a ZIP code," where residents come from more than 125 countries. This project has created videos and books that capture the vibrancy of the area, with beautiful photographs and compelling stories.

The project makes clear that locally owned businesses are vital to the success of the Columbia Pike community. The Columbia Pike Partnership advocates for the Pike's legacy businesses and for its large employers to help all of them remain in the area with the resources they need to thrive. The partnership has a strong base of community support, reflected in its volunteer board of directors. The board includes a remarkable list of local civic representatives, business executives and property owners, with Andrew Schneider leading the group as its executive director.

The Pike also has one of the more unusual public art installations, located at the western end of the Pike, near the boundary with Fairfax County. I have run out of room to provide a more detailed description; next week I will write about public art in Arlington, which will allow me to explain the meaning of that 50-foot wind turbine located on the corner of the Pike and South Jefferson Street.



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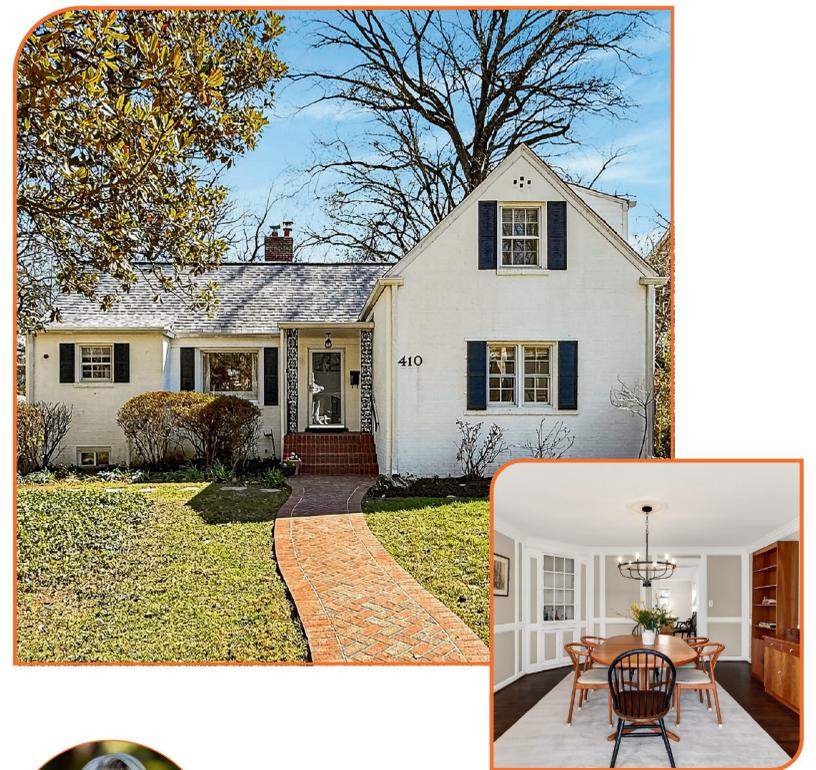
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