

The MONTEBELLO Voice

an independent gazette

when autumn leaves start to fall

November 7, 2019



Photo by Azita Mashayekhi

Internet 101 ... We need volunteers

On November 12 and 23 at 10 a.m. in the Community Center Lounge, a presentation will be given to those who signed up for assistance in connecting with the internet. These sessions will cover the basics including the benefits of connecting; hardware options; the costs associated with a router for WiFi throughout your unit, setting up a device, printing and scanning, and tips for staying safe, "The night is dark and full of terrors."

While information can be conveyed in a seminar format, most who signed up will be first-time users and will need one-on-one assistance. For this reason, we need computer and internet savvy residents to volunteer to assist.

This is intended primarily as a service to those who are not now connected. Just consider driving and getting lost. With a mobile phone with a GPS, voilà, you are back on your way. The benefits to those who are connected are huge but there is also a potential benefit to Montebello. We spend a huge amount of money delivering under-the-door notices that could be eliminated if we were able to go all-electronic.

You don't have to be a "wiz-kid" to help someone get connected. If you are willing to pitch in, please let me know at jrpowers@us.net with Internet 101 in the subject line. – *John R Powers* 📧

Official 2019 White House Christmas ornaments for sale

Montebello Music Club is selling the new collectible White House Historical Association ornaments honoring President Dwight D. Eisenhower for \$22. The ornament symbolizes President Eisenhower's commitment to innovation. In July 1957, Eisenhower was the first president to fly in a helicopter while in office; thereafter the helicopter became a feature of White House life.

Contacts for purchasing:

Building 1 – *David Ransom*

davidransom2@comcast.net

703-960-0650

Building 2 – *Yo Frommer*

yonlarry@gmail.com 703-317-1140

Building 3 – *Mark Beerthuis*

mbeerthuis@gmail.com 703-360-7191

Building 4 – *Carol Comlish*

ccomlish@msn.com 301-613-2008

Pay by cash or check made payable to: Montebello Music Club. Proceeds go to the Grand Piano Concert Series

Questions? Mark Beerthuis at mbeerthuis@gmail.com. 📧



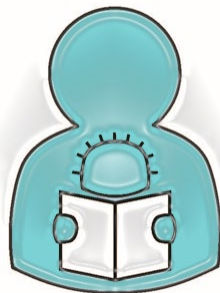
The Montebello Voice

Grandinvolve seeks volunteers

By *John Glaser*

Looking for a rewarding experience that benefits Fairfax County students, teachers and families? We need you! Grandinvolve is recruiting older adults as volunteers who would like to become mentors, reading/math helpers, and classroom assistants. No experience required. We need just a few hours of your time to make a difference to a student, teacher or family in our community.

Grandinvolve is a great opportunity for people to assist in helping challenged kids in elementary school, an important factor in their future success.



This fall we are targeting Title 1 elementary schools throughout the county,

with multiple new programs in the South County area. Hours are flexible and opportunities await.

Interested? Contact info@GrandInvolve.org or go to www.grandinvolvement.org. 📧

The Montebello Voice wants to hear from you

The MONTEBELLO Voice

an independent gazette

Alexandria, Virginia

This publication accepts no funding or oversight from advertisers, residents, or the Montebello Condominium Unit Owners Association. All opinions are encouraged and reflect the diversity of views in the community. All articles and photographs come from Montebello residents. To receive or contribute to this email-only gazette, contact montebellovoice@cox.net or visit on the web at www.montebellovoice.com.

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Mark Beerthuis, John Glaser, Bonnie Jacob, Ralph Johnson, Azita Mashayekhi, Andrew Masiuk, Dian McDonald, Sarah Newcomb, John Powers, Lisa Stedje

Projected near 7% future condo fees!

By Ralph Johnson, owner since 1982, Certified Tennis Instructor, retired.

There is much concern regarding ever-increasing cost of Montebello condo fees. Mr. Brian Goldberg provided valuable insight through analysis of data. His findings have been recently published. [*The Montebello Voice*, August 15, http://montebellovoice.com/TheMontebelloVoice_19_08_15.pdf, ed.] Seems like near 7% increase in condo fees are the future of residents and owners. The following are some of my experiences and thoughts for residents and owners facing these increasing condo fees.

An article was published in the October 2019 of *The Times of Montebello* regarding the surfacing of the tennis courts starting in 2011. I found this article biased, lacking information, with no indication of the money of owners spent to date. The article did not give likely cost for a required future surface. Mr. Jon Kandel, president of the BOD, stated he researched information in the archives of Montebello before publishing his findings. My question to Mr. Kandel: Why did you not ask the Facilities Manager to provide the information you desired for residents and owners?

Based on the title alone, the Facilities Manager was responsible for what happened beginning in 2011 to present. This person has first-hand knowledge regarding all consultants used and the selected construction companies who failed. The Facilities Manager oversaw construction, conducted final walk-throughs, and knows the costs. From my understanding, it is on the table to hire three companies prior to the next required surfacing with cost not to exceed \$20,000 for the consultants. It is also my understanding that the consultants were hired in the past. In fact one, Bishops who applied the second

surface, which failed, stated in an email that they did not know what they were doing and suggested that consultants be hired to tell them what to do. Bishops is now one of the three that is on the table to be hired as a future consultant. In fact, Bishops earlier this year recommended that a fabric cloth be stretched over the present failed surface at a cost of \$30,000, plus moving fencing for another \$5,900. The Tennis Club was told that this was a done deal by the Facilities Manager, only to be reversed by the General Manager apparently based on a photo. I believe that this was my photo sent to Management of bubbles that were going to be covered by a fabric. Somewhere common rational sense prevailed, saving owners \$35,900 and the prevention of another failure. [*The Montebello Voice*, August 29, http://montebellovoice.com/TheMontebelloVoice_19_08_29.pdf, ed.]

What has been the total cost since 2011, including all consultants and the two surfaces to date? The first surface cost \$170,000 as stated by the Facilities Manager. Can it be assumed that the second surface was a like amount of \$170,000? Will the third necessary surface be \$170,000 or likely more? This totals \$510,000 to have our three tennis courts surfaced! What has been the cost of all consultants, not just the one cited, the one that was not mentioned, plus the future consultants? How is the concrete slab at Montebello different from thousands of above ground slabs used for tennis courts? What about attorney fees? Members of the Tennis Club were told that litigation was taking place around 2014, therefore our questions could not be answered regarding the failing tennis courts surface. What was received by Montebello owners as the result of failures which surely were covered by warranties? Was there litigation, what was the cost and what was received as a result? These questions has been asked a number of times. I

have not seen the answer, has anyone? Management or BOD, may we have answers to accurately know what has happened with our condo fees? If any resident or owner knows how to secure this information, please do so.

When attempting to get answers regarding the tennis court surfacing, I was told by the General Manager that he was not interested in the history of the tennis courts surfaces. I have always understood that "history is our now situation." Later Mr. Kandel published an article stating that information received from Management to the BOD is well vetted. Residents and owners, draw you own conclusions about these conflicting statements.

Do residents and owners remember the beautiful mature trees that once existed on the hill on the south side of the Fitness Center that were destroyed during construction? Remember the beautiful drawing of future trees in their fall splendor as would be seen out the windows of the Fitness Center? What actually was seen out the window this fall were small trees with dead or brown leaves and weeds. It also appears that the room never used except for a hallway will be demolished during the planned CC renovation. Great planning. Was there cost overruns?

Let's assume that a company for profit was started in the 1980s. The company with employees produces 1,000 widgets monthly. The company uses new technology as it becomes available. At present the company is still producing the 1,000 widgets. A rational guess would be that the number of employees would be the same or fewer at the present time in 2019. An organization is established in the 1980s to manage 1,000 condos. The organization uses new technology as it becomes available. At present the organization still manages 1,000 condos. Would any owner or resident believe that the number of employees has not increased at Montebello

governance & management

along with their salaries, benefits, need for office space and equipment? How did Montebello survive for around the first 30 years with one general manager? Now we need an assistant general manager, plus an assistant to the facilities manager. How many other assistants and departments have been added? How many additional employees to maintain the same square footage? What is the increase of the number of employees at Montebello during the lifetime of MCUOA?

When a notice is sent to residents and owners, I receive a tickle on my wrist from a watch. I can read the email within a minute of it being sent, even in Florida. I then return to my condo in the spring to find 50 or more notices stuck under my door. I pick them up and take them directly to the trash. At what cost to me and the 1,000 other condos to copy these memos and distribute under doors? The vast majority of residents and owners have digital devices. An app could be put on foyer monitors for the few who do not. This is one example, what other waste of funds occur at Montebello?

I live in two different gated communities during the year. One, in Florida (<https://www.solivita.com/>), is well managed where employees are expected to have the skills to do their jobs and released when they do not. At times, outside companies are hired who produce desired results likely covered by warranties. There are no consultants hired of which I am aware. The second, Montebello, seems to have consultants for about every task. Do management employees not have the skills to do the job, or skills to hire competent outside companies? Is hiring consultants a way of passing responsibilities to others, therefore not being held accountable? It is interesting that I enjoy similar properties with more than twice the amenities at half of the cost in a gated community in Florida compared to Montebello. How can that be explained? I also enjoy a atmosphere in

Florida where the owners are valued more than management, as management exists only to provide services paid for by HOA fees.

It was published that in the near future pay for some employees will be \$15 per hour. This information is public, then why is it not possible to know the range of salaries for each position of all management employees? Who hired a person to do a job having no idea the amount of pay that person receives?

The Community Center renovation is interesting. It appears that the Community Center is being demolished on the inside because it is 37 years old. My condo and all condos are likewise about 37 years old. Do all owners need to do the same as with the CC to bring all condos to code? If not, why not? As owners, can we afford to remodel the CC and our condos? I don't want to destroy my condo, but wish to replace 24-year-old carpet. Nope, better save my money for the Community Center used primarily by an expanding management. I probably use the CC less than 1% of the time, and spend the other 99% in my condo on the 24-year-old carpet.

Purchaser Reserve Contribution (PRC) is interesting as presented that the purchaser will pay the PRC fee when a condo is sold. There is a recommendation to change the amount of the fee from two to three months. I always thought the price of the exchange of real estate is determined by negotiations between the parties. How is it determined that the purchaser only will pay the PRC? In reality, the cost of the PRC will be taken from the value of the property.

I sent an article to *The Times of Montebello* for publishing in the November edition regarding Mr. Kandel's article. It was not published, nor did I received a response as to why. Some years ago, Mikhailina Karina recognized the need for "uncut, uncensored and unofficial" flow of information among Montebello residents and owners by starting and

publishing *The Montebello Voice*. Mikhailina devotes much of her time and funds on our behalf. Residents and owners cannot thank her enough for her professional knowledge and standards for fair journalism. Because of Mikhailina, we have an option, not controlled by Management or the BOD, to equally communicate. I strongly encourage all residents and owners to subscribe and contribute to *The Montebello Voice*!

If any of the above is a concern to you, then a change of a few members of the BOD is necessary. A person who would spend Montebello condo fees as if funds are your own money would be a nice start. Have a belief that management employees should be held accountable for the job they do. Perhaps you believe that not all situations need hired consultants, just competent managers that will contract companies with proven track records with warranties. If you would rather spend your money than allow it to be taken in condo fees for tennis courts consultants and surfaces that have failed so far, plus more consultants and surface costing around \$600,000. Perhaps you miss the mature beautiful trees on the bank near the fitness center more than the weeds plus the \$2,000,000 in cost. Perhaps you would rather spend money on your condo, or your children's college education, or anything rather than gut the community center for \$7,200,000. I have guessed that the total amount is around \$9,800,000. To Management, if this number is not accurate, and I am sure it is not, then provide the exact amount spent and the amount projected for the three areas. Dividing this amount among 1,000 condos makes each owner's portion \$9,800 or a similar amount when corrected by management. 🏠

On visiting a new bead shop in Old Town

By Bonnie Jacob

Like most people who make jewelry, I love to find new places to buy beads. It's a wonderful way to spend an hour or two – browsing through materials, shapes and colors from local artisans and faraway suppliers, while, often, listening to storekeepers who gladly tell me all about them.

Of course, I pass the stories along with the jewelry I create: who made the beads, where I found them, how they came to be there. I usually begin with how I was walking down a street in (pick one or more) Albuquerque, San Francisco, Bilbao, Hangzhou, Honolulu, Des Moines, the East Side of Manhattan, or that little town in Colorado – and I just happened to see this little store I do believe I can tell such a story about every necklace I've ever made.

So, like me, you might be happy to know that there's a new bead shop, Praha Beads and Jewelry, on the second floor at 215 South Union Street, in Old Town Alexandria. (The store is open now, but there will be a grand opening on December 7, to coincide with the Scottish Walk.)

I stopped in the store on November 2, the day after it opened, and was pleased with what I found: a nicely curated selection of semi-precious stones, plus freshwater pearls and Czech glass beads, as well as the basics—findings, tools and supplies. The vibe is welcoming—kind of a European boutique meets your grandmother's parlor. I understand there will soon be a resident poodle.

And for Montebellans, there's a local angle: owner Tracey Navratil

is the daughter-in-law of longtime Montebello residents, Addy and Gene Krizek, who now reside with Tracey and her husband, Paul, in Hollin Hills. Tracey told me that she still has some unpacking to do, but as soon as she clears the space, she will be offering classes in beading.

Tracey used to work at the Potomac Bead Company, which had an emporium on King Street until a few years ago. She says it's been her dream for many years to open her own store, based on her vision of what it should look and feel like to shop there. I have to say, her ideas felt just right to this customer. I filled a bag with some turquoise cubes, various rhodonite, jasper and quartz pieces, and a string of oval glass beads, along with sterling spacers and findings.

I also bought six beads in an assortment of pastels, decorated with silver and crystal, that kind of look like Russian Easter eggs, only round. I have no idea what I will use them for – but whatever I make, it will come with a good story.

For information on classes or hours of operation, please check the web site at <http://www.prahaheadsandjewelry.com> or call 703-838-5000. 📞



The Montebello Voice wants to hear from you: musings, travels, announcements, photos, book reviews, commentary, memoirs, essays, analysis, poems, suggestions, club news, recipes, and free ads

A twice-monthly publication for the residents, by the residents

To pee or not to pee?

By Sarah Newcomb

With apologies to William Shakespeare, if referring to pets within the Montebello garages, the answer is not to pee.

No one loves dogs more than the Montebello Pet Club members. But please be aware that the garage is not a permissible place to walk pets who need to relieve themselves, regardless of weather conditions. Owners are responsible for cleaning up everywhere on the Montebello grounds including within the garages. If your dog needs to “go” before owners can reach the exit or while owners are loading pets into a vehicle in the garage, owners must clean up any solids or liquids pets leave behind. It’s good to keep a roll of paper towels and a couple of disposal bags stashed in the car.

Owners can usually find a sheltered spot from bad weather among the closely placed trees at the exits or under the balconies that over-hang exit areas.

If owners cannot walk their pets, many friends will be happy to help you, just to enjoy a few moments with a friendly pet. We also have several residents who provide dog walking services at reasonable rates. Neighbors can provide referrals, and business cards from residents who walk dogs are posted on our parking garage level 3 “B3” bulletin boards. Please try these pet-friendly courtesies:

- 🐾 Create a regular schedule of outdoor walks for your pet. Based on this experience, they will understand how long they must wait to go out.

- 🐾 Start for “out” early enough to allow for putting on gear (both yours and your pet’s), waiting for the elevator,

and getting outside. Adjust your start times to allow more time for elderly pets and puppies.

- 🐾 Take your pet across the street to the Pet Area before allowing them to relieve themselves. Neighbors entering and exiting our buildings should not have to walk through puddles of liquid or weave around solid deposits left in elevators, immediately outside the doors, against trash structures or in the crosswalks and roadways.

Pets add so much enjoyment and healthy benefits to our lives. As pet owners, we also benefit from Montebello’s pet friendly atmosphere. When we clean-up regularly, we create an environment our pets can enjoy and ensure the support from our neighbors who are welcoming our furry family members.

Pawsitively yours,
MontebelloPetClub@gmail.com 📧

Chess Club game nights and holiday season schedule

By Lisa Stedje

November’s event is canceled in honor of Thanksgiving. December’s event is canceled in honor of the December holidays.

The Chess Club will resume its regular schedule in January 2020, ringing in a new year of Chess starting on Thursday, January 23, 2020!

If you haven’t had the courage to try playing Chess — or to resume playing Chess after a long hiatus — please fear not! We’d love to play Chess with you! Often the master players are extremely kind in offering tips or refreshers on the game of Chess. Please don’t be shy! It’s all for fun!!! Everyone is welcome! Neighbors! Visitors! Friends! Family! All levels of Chess players can play! All ages!

Chess Club Game Nights are usually held on the fourth Thursday of every

month (unless otherwise noted). The Game Nights take place in the Montebello Community Center’s card room and run from 7 to 9:30 p.m. You don’t need to bring anything, but if you do happen to own a Chess set, please feel free to bring it with you.

We have an ongoing, open, non-commitment-based, free membership enrollment for interested Chess players of all levels and of all ages. Chess nights are always enjoyable and offer terrific learning opportunities, as well as camaraderie!

Chess Club leadership contacts:

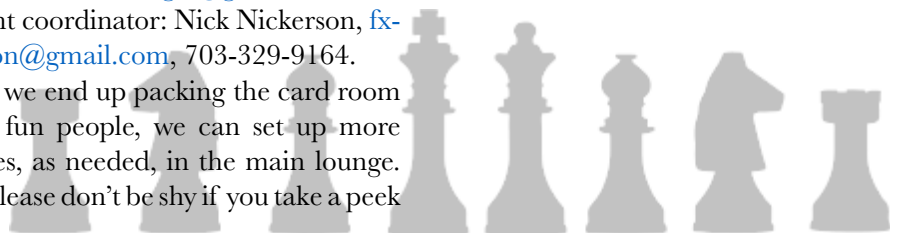
Coordinator: Lisa J. Stedje, lisa@stedje.com or stedjel@gmail.com. Assistant coordinator: Nick Nickerson, fx-nixson@gmail.com, 703-329-9164.

If we end up packing the card room with fun people, we can set up more games, as needed, in the main lounge. So, please don’t be shy if you take a peek

into the card room and think there isn’t enough room for more players. We will definitely include everyone who would like to give Chess a whirl!

It’s always okay to show up late, but if there aren’t at least two actual Chess Club members present to begin playing by 7:30 p.m, then the games will be canceled for the night.

If you’re brand new to Chess but you’d like to check out our Chess Club while playing a relatively quiet or cerebral game that doesn’t compete with the ancient game of Chess (e.g., Scrabble, Checkers, Othello, Backgammon), you may bring such a game and hang out with us! 📧



out & about



In celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, the Montebello Speaker Series featured Adriana Ospina, curator of collections and education at Art Museum of the Americas at the Organization of the American States. She presented highlights of the current exhibition, Visual Memory: Home and Place, with art by Iliana Emilia Garcia and Scherezade Garcia.

Photo by Dian McDonald



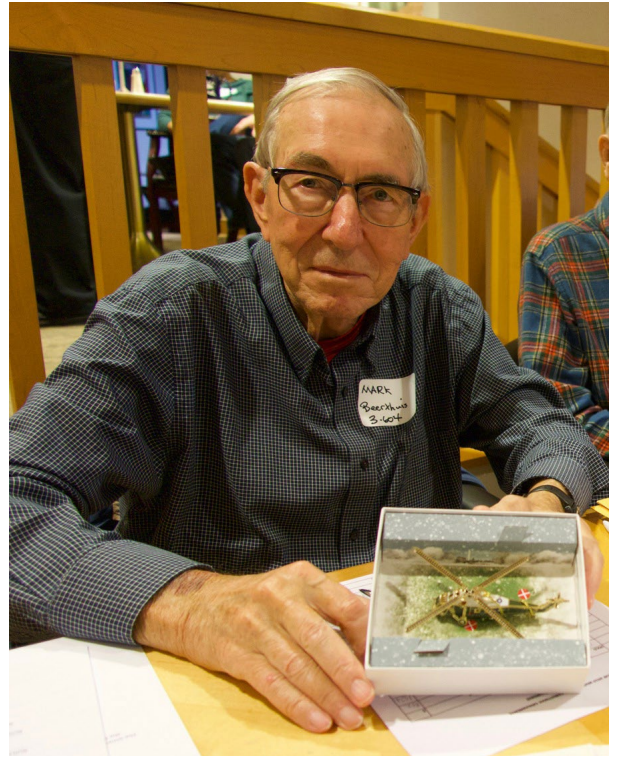
Montebello Halloween party

Photo by Andrew Masiuk

halloween



cup of joe



cup of joe



cup of joe



The Speaker Series Presents

RUNNING STRONG FOR AMERICAN INDIAN YOUTH

Paul Krizek, who as General Counsel for **Running Strong for American Indian Youth**, will offer a talk on the good work of **Running Strong**, information about our Virginia Tribes, and historic information on Native Americans.



Billy Mills (Oglala Lakota), American gold medalist in the 10,000 meter race at the 1964 Tokyo Summer Olympic Games, joined with Paul Krizek in 1986 to establish **Running Strong for American Indian Youth**. **Running Strong** was originated under Christian Relief Services in 1986.

NOTE: Paul's father Eugene Krizek, founder of Christian Relief Services, is a former Montebello neighbor.

**November 7th at 7:30 pm
Community Center Lounge**

Sponsored by the Activities Committee

The Speaker Series Presents

IN HONOR OF VETERANS DAY

Jack Kull, Regional Policy Chief (Southeast Asia) at Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Agency, will talk on its mission of accounting for U.S. personnel from past conflicts to their families and the nation.



In 2018, the agency accounted for 203 formerly missing persons from past conflicts. There are over 82,000 DoD personnel and other individuals who remain unaccounted from the WW II-era through the Gulf Wars.

A hobby that is of particular interest to Jack, and also a tribute to the families who've lost a Soldier in the Vietnam War, is the creation of 12-inch action figures in the fallen soldier's likeness. He will bring a few of these for display, as shown.

An apt phrase coined by a commander upon hearing a similar briefing, "we will always come and get you; we will always come and find you."

**Monday, November 11th (Veterans Day)
7:30 in the evening
Community Center Lounge**

Sponsored by the Activities Committee

A Taste of Montebello presents ...

How to Eat Gluten-Free And Love It!!!

What is Gluten anyway?

Gluten- Free? What no more bread or pasta?

Some good news and some more good news!!!!

A discussion with hand-outs.

Preparing a Gluten-Free lasagna and enjoying a taste.



Thursday, November 14, 2019
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm in Party Room 2

Sponsored by the Activities Committee

Presented by Alison Tarshis

**If walls
could talk**

*Drawings, paintings, and photographs
group show*

**Montebello Cafe
Saturday, November 16 until
the wall comes tumbling down
Opening reception
4 to 6 p.m.**



The Montebello Grounds Committee Presents:

Cathy Ledec, Fairfax County Citizen of the Year

Cathy Ledec is president of the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park, chair of the Fairfax County Tree Commission, president of the Pavilions at Huntington Metro Home Owners Association, a Virginia Master Naturalist, an Audubon at Home Ambassador, ...and volunteer leader of bird walks at Montebello

What Wildlife Are Telling Us

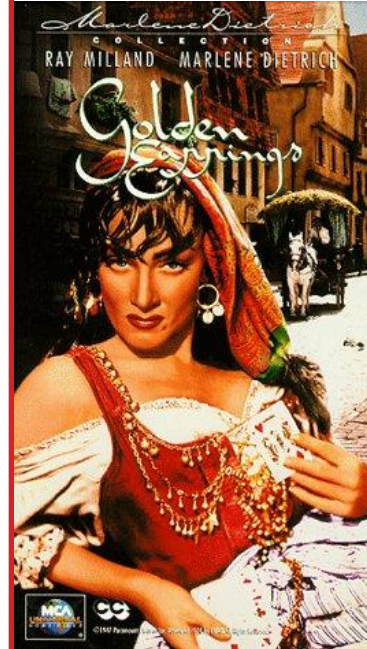
- Wildlife and wetland renovation at Huntley Meadows
- Wildlife at Montebello
- Implications for health of the environment



Wednesday, Nov 13, 7:30 pm
Community Center Lounge

Montebello Classic Movie Night

Wednesday, November 20, 2019, at 7pm
on the Big Screen in the Community Center



Golden Earrings

This is what made going to the movies so exciting! Marlene Dietrich and Ray Milland star in a romantic spy drama (with a wonderful song), set around World War II. The film was made in 1947, but it's one you'll wish you'd seen earlier, and often.

FREE popcorn, candies, soft drinks:
A Great Classic Movie Night!

Your host, Pamela Copley, will give you a pre-show briefing on the stars and the production, and then give you all the post-screening "back story" highlights. Pamela can be contacted at PvonGruber@aol.com.



and



Invite you to our film & discussion



THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 21 7:30 P.M. PARTY ROOM 2

THE MOST INCREDIBLE STORY-EVER!



Featuring groundbreaking special effects, this 1957 sci-fi movie stands out as one of the more ingenious, unsettling, and everlasting movies of its kind.

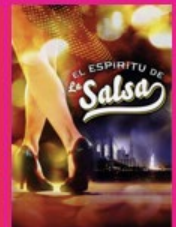
Leslee Levy will introduce the film and lead the post-movie discussion.

Please note the date change. Due to Thanksgiving, it's a week earlier than our usual time slot.

"SUNDAY AFTERNOON FEVER"
Dance Class & Social

Join your Montebello Neighbors each Sunday, 1pm-2pm, at the Montebello Community Center for these FUN & FREE Sunday Afternoon Dance Classes & Socials.

Share with your neighbors as Peter, Laura, & Cathy teach the latest fun Club Dances and moves from "The Salsa Room" Latin Night Club for Bachata, Cha-Cha, New York Hustle, Merengue, & Salsa.



RSVP to Peter ("Tall Tex") at PeterSalsaDancer@gmail.com

See Peter's Salsa Demo Video at: <https://youtu.be/mAwErTGM38I>

See Bachata 2019 Video at: <https://youtu.be/GY2fE5xr6XU>

See Peter's Bachata Instruction Video "Peter Blackledge Bachata Dance Class 3Nov2019" at: <https://youtu.be/2c5J0srVQAE>



When you get the choice to "Sit It Out" or "Dance," we hope you "Dance"

final glance



Virginia elections

Painting by Azita Mashayekhi