

# The **MONTTEBELLO** Voice

an independent gazette

come together

November 6, 2020



### Scams, scams, scams

By John Powers

Scams come in all fashions and I was shocked to see the huge number of variations that are being practiced today (look at the left-hand column of this bunco website [http://www.nabihq.org/en-us/cons\\_and\\_scams/](http://www.nabihq.org/en-us/cons_and_scams/)).

Of immediate concern is the scammers trying to trick consumers during the current on-line shopping bubble by sending fake delivery notices. “The scammers are counting ... on you to open the attachment or click on the link and give them the information they need to defraud you.” (Herb Weisbaum, Consumer’s Checkbook, October 19, 2020).

They suck you in by sending you an email that replicates in every detail that of your bank, your delivery service or an on-line shopping service. All they ask is that you click on a link. When you do, it is game over. Never, never, never, click on a link in an email you receive. Always go through your normal process of logging on.

The scam that got me started on this was from “Virginia Power.” Their play was that my account was in arrears and I was going to lose power if I didn’t make up the balance in 30 minutes. They, of course, offered a number to

call to do that. Even if I thought it was possible that I was in arrears (I have auto draw), I would not have used their number but would have found the correct number for Dominion Energy (not Virginia Power) and contacted them that way.

Please don’t depend on your search engine to protect you. It can send you to links that can lock up your computer. It happened to my former wife two months ago and a Montebello resident who paid \$400 to get her computer unlocked. You can protect yourself against ransomware in two ways: a) download all your files onto an external hard drive that is disconnected except when doing the download and b) have a computer pro on call who may be able to undo the problem remotely or by working on it in her or his shop.

The number of Phishing schemes is exploding, per Laura Daly, “Phone and email scammers have pivoted during the pandemic. Here’s how to protect yourself,” Washington Post, November 4. For example, “Thank you for shopping with Amazon. Your Visa debit card has been charged for an Apple iPhone 11 for \$999, and it is ready for shipment. To cancel the purchase, press one. To confirm the dispatch, press two.” Never do that.

Laura makes several excellent suggestions to protect yourself: a) don’t trust caller ID; b) don’t click on any numbers suggested in a call; call the alleged company itself separately; c) make sure your software and applications for computers, tablets and phones are up to date and d) beware of on-line quizzes that provide personal data. The bottom line is that if you ever receive a call or an email that seems fishy, ask some knowledgeable person before responding.

Finally, join an upcoming Montebello-sponsored Zoom seminar on scams provided by the Fairfax County PD on Monday, November 16 at 7:30 p.m. 📺

#### Cover photo:

*In March, at the beginning of Covid, it was mandatory for all hospital employees to wear a mask. As we came in on our shift, we were issued a mask for the day. In my field of interventional radiology we do sterile procedures requiring surgical masks, which I wore during the day, different from the issued mask that I wore when I would leave my department. I started saving the issued procedure masks and was trying to think of something creative that I could do with them. I decided I wanted to make a dress and needed a model to build it on, thus the mannequin. It has taken me a couple of months to hand sew each mask on and then I découpaged it so it would be stiff. It is a piece of art to remind me of all the long hours and hard work that the employees of INOVA Alexandria Hospital did during the surge of Covid-19. I am proud to be a part of that team and the hard work still continues. – Karen Shaw*

**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](mailto:montebellovoice@cox.net) or visit on the web at [www.montebellovoice.com](http://www.montebellovoice.com).*

*Editor & Designer*  
Mikhailina Karina

*Contributors*

Joe de Angelis, Carole Appel, Suzanne Beerthuis, Karen Justesen, Guin Jones, Dian McDonald, Lauren Pierce, John Powers, Leslie Rodriguez, Karen Shaw, Bob Shea, Joyce Amenta Schmidt

## Local geography

On Oct. 28, I needed to go to Jack Taylor's Alexandria Toyota dealership to get a new extra key for my car. The address on the dealer's website is 3750 Richmond Hwy. That's the address I programmed into my car's GPS. But the GPS wouldn't recognize that street number. So pretty much knowing where the dealership was, I drove north from Montebello toward Old Town, and then continued toward Potomac Yards, which is across the street from the car dealer. When I got there, I said to one

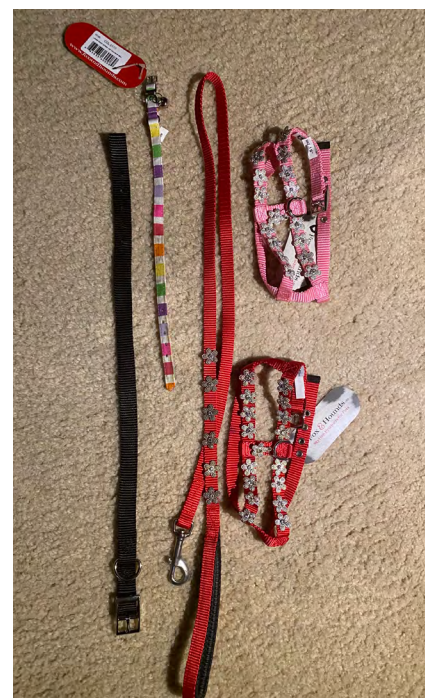
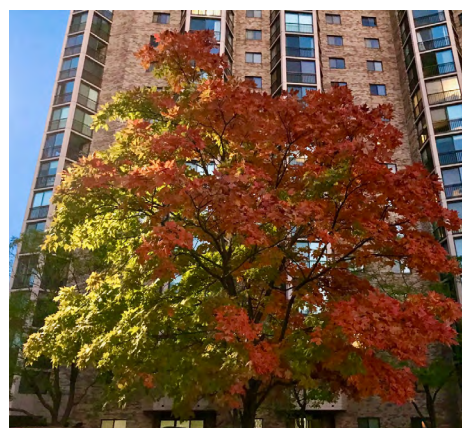


of the mechanics that I was surprised that my GPS wouldn't show me the route to the business. This is what he said: the current GPS mechanisms list only

the Jefferson Davis Hwy for that road. In November, the updates for 2021 will show the road as the Richmond Highway. That's so interesting! I'm really glad that the county changed the name of that road. – *Carole Appel* 📍

## A little back story

In the beginning, when Montebello was being built, Charles Becherer bought a unit in building 1. Howard Schmidt was on the same bowling team as Charles Becherer, heard about Montebello, and bought a unit in building 2. Howard Schmidt, Don Trilling, and I worked at the Department of Transportation at the same time. Don heard about Montebello from Howard and bought a unit in building 3. All of us maintained our friendship over the years. It is with great sadness to hear of Don's passing. – *Joyce Amenta Schmidt* 📍



## Free leashes and collars

We thank Montebello Café owners José and Ugur for donating hundreds of items to the Montebello Pet Club. We offer them free of charge to any Montebelloan who could use them; remaining items will be donated to local pet shelters. If interested, please contact the [MontebelloPetClub@gmail.com](mailto:MontebelloPetClub@gmail.com). – *Lauren Pierce*



## Memorial trees for Jorn

On October 27, three trees were planted in memory of Jorn Justesen, who died one year earlier. Jorn loved our woods and walking in them. The trees are behind building 2 alongside the path just downstream from the footbridge. They were purchased with generous donations from 29 of Jorn's Montebello friends and neighbors.

Jorn was a citizen of Denmark, and his ashes are buried there. The trees are American beech trees, which are similar in appearance and growth habit to the Danish beech, the national tree of Denmark. – *Karen Justesen* 📍

# after the party

Precinct: 607 HUNTINGTON CALL (703) 324-8765

FAIRFAX COUNTY - UNOFFICIAL RETURNS  
GENERAL AND SPECIAL ELECTIONS - NOVEMBER 3, 2020

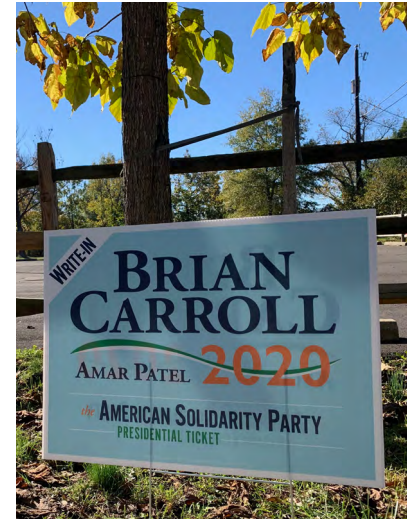
Total Counted Ballots: 916 Total Curbside Voters: 2  
 Provisional Ballots - No ID: 0 Provisional Ballots - Not Registered: 2 Provisional Ballots - Other: 29

ELECTORS FOR PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT				UNITED STATES SENATE			HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 8 <sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT		
DEMOCRATIC PARTY BIDEN / HARRIS	REPUBLICAN PARTY TRUMP / PENCE	LIBERTARIAN PARTY JORGENSEN / COHEN	Write-ins	Mark R. WARNER	Daniel M. GADE	Write-ins	Donald S. BEYER, JR.	Jeff A. JORDAN	Write-in
538	337	19	15	558	346	2	540	354	3

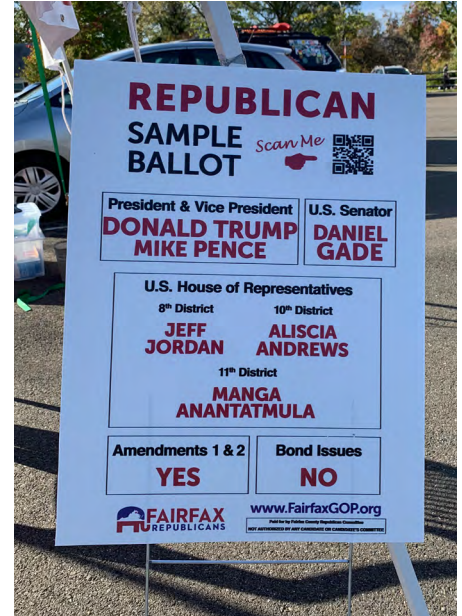
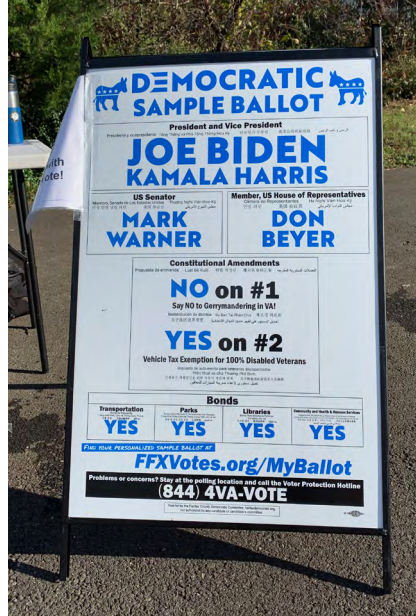
QUESTION 1		QUESTION 2		TRANSPORTATION BONDS		PARKS AND PARKS FACILITIES BONDS		PUBLIC LIBRARY BONDS		COMMUNITY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES BONDS	
YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
570	366	738	147	550	334	582	299	565	311	587	296

Caller: Pamela Copley Person receiving call: Mark Peterson

[POLLING PLACES MAY REMOVE AND DISCARD THIS FORM ON NOVEMBER 5, 2020]



Election Day images from Montebello's polling place - MK



# by the numbers

Absentee Return Statistics by Congressional District for 2020 November General

\*Please note these statistics may not take into account all surrendered absentee ballots\*

## Commonwealth of Virginia

88%

## District 08

90%

### Voter Registration Statistics Locality Statistics as of 11/1/2020

#### Locality Totals

Locality: 059 - FAIRFAX COUNTY

Beginning Totals	Add:					Subtract:					Net Change:					Total Registered Voters:			
	ReReg	New	Reinstate	Trans In	Chg In	Chg Out	Trans Out	Reg Purge	Deceased	Felony	Incom	Reg Error	Out Of St	Per Choice	Other				
Month:	775129	979	12760	8	4244	5068	5068	3605	0	316	16	2	24	764	119	3	12163	0.0%	787187
Year:	749862	3716	48301	25	22486	27026	27026	26347	0	3724	135	38	61	2304	449	5	37749	0.0%	
		Inactivate/Month: 0			Reactivate/Month: 979					Inactivate/Year: 0				Reactivate/Year: 0					

### Registration Statistics - FAIRFAX COUNTY

Precinct	Active Voter Count	Inactive Voter Count	Total Voter Count
607 - HUNTINGTON	4,545	303	4,848

#### 607 - HUNTINGTON (08)

Candidate	Votes	Percent
Joseph R. Biden Democratic	538	59.19%
Donald J. Trump Republican	337	37.07%
Jo Jorgensen Libertarian	19	2.09%
Write In Write-In	15	1.65%

Last Modified on 11/03/2020 09:13 PM

- In Loudoun County, [over 75% of its 282,263 registered voters had cast a ballot as of 4 p.m.](#) (Nearly 55% had voted early.)
- In Alexandria, [76% of its active voters had cast ballots as of 4 p.m.](#) Turnout had already topped 2016's by 4%.
- In Fairfax County, [over 70% of its 787,000 registered voters had cast a ballot as of 4 p.m.](#) (51% had voted early.)
- In Arlington County, about 73% of voters had cast their ballots — [13% in person](#) as of 4:30 p.m. ([63% had voted early.](#))

Source: Virginia Department of Elections <https://www.elections.virginia.gov>

# An election night memory

By Suzanne Beerthuis

I grew up in a small village in Nebraska. We were poor – cash poor, at least. No electricity (though I don't remember when rural electrification arrived), no phone, and a battery-operated radio.

Dad was a Republican; Mom was a Democrat. Neighbors would often drop by to play cards, listen to them parry back and forth, and hear Mom defend herself – she had to serve on the election board because it had to be balanced and she was the only Democrat in the precinct.

It was 1948 and Thomas Dewey was running against Harry Truman and expected to win. Mom came home from her stint at the polls after seeing all her Republican neighbors casting their votes. After supper (as we called the evening meal), my parents turned

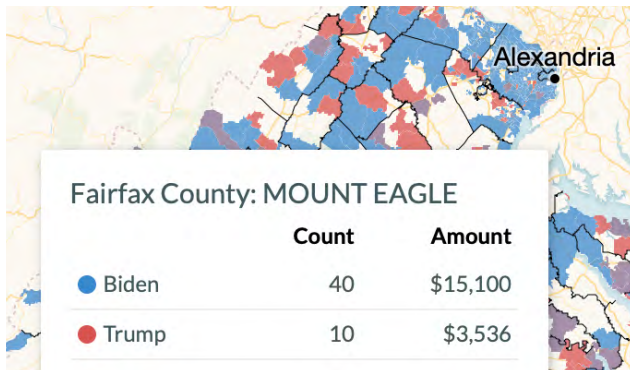
on the radio to follow the returns. Guess my brother and I had listened to too much Bobby Benson and the BRB Riders and Sergeant Preston and Yukon King (the programs that were available between after school chores and homework time)! The radio died! So they retired to the car and listened on the car radio. Sometime after midnight Dewey was proclaimed winner. Dad went to bed happy. Mom could not believe it. She stayed up until, in the very wee hours, Truman was named winner.

She prepared a nice breakfast before she broke the news to Dad. He could

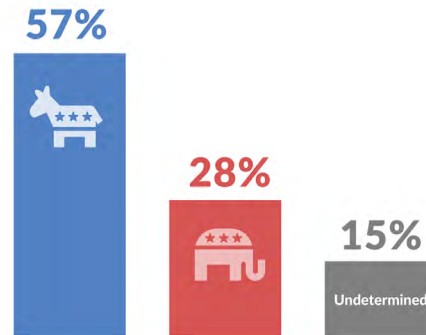


not believe it! Went out to the car to check and Mom had run the battery down. I have never – before or since – seen my Dad so upset. He slammed the door, strode out to the barn, saddled the horse, and headed into the grain elevator in town – a gathering place in rural communities – where he found all the neighbors commiserating. Elections since just haven't had that drama. 🐎

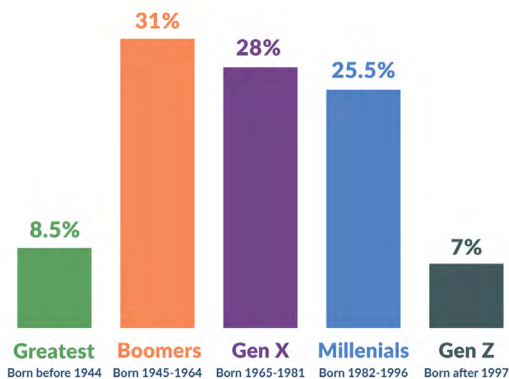
## Campaign contributions



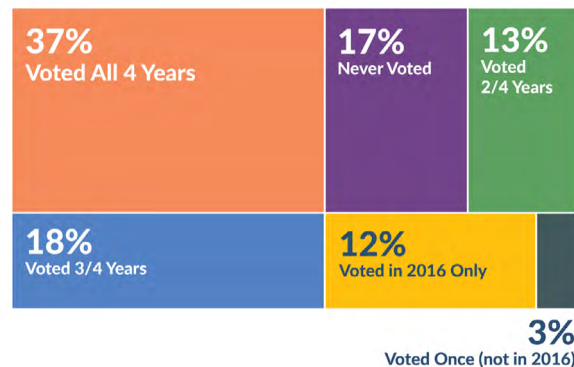
## Likely party (Virginia)



## Generation (Virginia)



## Voter participation in the last 4 years



Source: Virginia Public Access Project [vpap.org](http://vpap.org)

# Watering geraniums in the rain

By Bob Shea

We all remember our first real job – not just teen babysitting, delivering papers, or cutting grass, but the real one where we worked 40 hours a week, probably punched a time clock, and had a boss who was really a boss. The summer I turned 16, I went to work at the Pine Grove Cemetery in Manchester, New Hampshire, as a laborer. I was paid \$1.05 per hour, \$42 per week. My first real job.

Pine Grove Cemetery, first opened in 1851, is owned by the city, and at that time I worked there consisted of almost 130 acres. Today it is much larger with almost another 100 acres still to be developed. It is a “perpetual care” cemetery, meaning that once a burial plot or plots were purchased, the city would maintain the site forever. That includes cutting the grass, trimming around headstones, raking leaves in the fall, and watering the flowers in graveside urns. Pine Grove was huge and hilly with some new sections with graves close together while other older ones had huge vanity headstones and mausoleums.

My first job as a laborer was to water the urns and remove all the dead leaves and blossoms. I was issued a burlap sack, a 3-foot piece of hose, a 3-gallon watering can, and a crescent wrench. There were ground-level faucets about every 75 feet apart all over the landscape. The most common flower, and the one needing the most care, was the geraniums. The blossoms turned black, and the leaves turned yellow.

There were two of us doing that job, my half and his. It would take almost a whole week to do my half, plucking dead blossoms and leaves, and watering each urn. When finished, we started all over again. Anyone familiar with geraniums knows that they have a distinctive odor. For that whole summer, my

hands smelled like geraniums.

Being a city-owned cemetery in the 1950s, it did not have many labor laws or benefits. We worked from 8 a.m. to noon, and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Depending where one was in the 130 acres, it might take 15 minutes at lunch to walk to and from the garage where the equipment was stored at night and where our lunch buckets were. Thus lunch hour was often much less than one hour. Needless to say, there was no overtime.



If we did not work, we did not get paid, none of us, the part-time summer help as well as the full-time employees. If it rained, the choice was ours. Needing money for college, it was an easy choice. I worked. One really feels stupid to be wearing a yellow slicker on a rainy summer day watering geraniums. No one stopped working due to rain: the grass was cut, the headstones were trimmed, graves were dug and filled, and geraniums were plucked and watered. I always prayed that no one I knew would visit the cemetery and see me watering in my slicker in a down-pour.

Returning for a second summer, I was “promoted” to being a helper on a grave crew. No power equipment was allowed or used. We dug and filled graves using square-bladed D-handle

shovels. The superintendent of the cemetery would check to make sure all graves had 90 degree corners. We needed 45 minutes minimum to close a grave after a service. With no overtime allowed, any graveside service that ended after 4:15 p.m. meant we would be working unpaid to complete the job.

It may sound uncaring or crass, but I have stood out of sight, leaning on a shovel, looking at my watch, and silently urging the mourners to depart. We were not allowed to be seen by the attendees, but we were close by, probably behind some shrubbery, saying under our collective breath, go, go, go.”

We had to strip away the artificial grass, move the floral arrangements, lower the coffin, put the concrete top on the vault, remove the lowering device, fill the grave, compact the soil, take apart and remove the big box that held the dirt, replace, water, roll the sod, put the floral arrangements back in place, and pack up all our equipment into a dump truck. Our pay stopped at 5 p.m. regardless of how long the process took. Three days later, we returned to remove the faded floral arrangements and take them to the landfill. As an aside, that summer my younger sister had some of the prettiest hair bows of any little girl in the neighborhood. Now you know! Early recycling?

Being a grave digger was an adventure. Even with extra unpaid hours, at least you felt that you were doing a job that needed to be done. Conversely, watering urns of geraniums in the rain made one feel just plain dumb. It shows what a young man will do to earn a few dollars for college even if smelly hands, a watering can, and a yellow slicker are part of the job.

After two summers at Pine Grove Cemetery, I went to work the next summer as a houseboy at a high-end country club, but that is another story. 🍷

# halloween



Photos by Leslie Rodriguez  
The Montebello Voice



# How the Caribbean Islands got their names

By Joe de Angelis

## As one travels from island to island

in the Caribbean, one can not help but wonder at the diversity of the island names and how they came to be. Many of the island names originated with Christopher Columbus, but what was his methodology? In recent years Christopher Columbus has received a lot of bad press; however, be that as it may, he was responsible for the naming of numerous Caribbean islands.

As were most Europeans at that time, Columbus was a devout Catholic, and as such religion played a major part in his naming of the islands. This is evidenced by the many names of saints and religious references used by Columbus when naming the islands he discovered. In particular, Columbus had a penchant for naming

islands after the saint whose feast day it was when he discovered an island. He did not restrict the naming of islands to saints; however, he also included other religious entities. For example the island of San Salvador in the Bahamas was the first island sighted and visited by Columbus. The native Lucayan Taino people called it Guanahani, but Columbus re-named it San Salvador for Christ the Savior. However, not all of the names Columbus applied had a religious origin, nor did they all endure.

Some of the names given by Columbus were based on first impressions or observations. For example, Costa Rica (rich coast) may have been the result of Columbus observing many of the natives wearing gold ornaments, which led

him to believe the island contained an abundance of precious metals. However some of the names that Columbus chose for the islands that he discovered did not gain permanency. He originally named the island of Grenada Conception after the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, which was the Catholic

tigua and Barbuda on the other hand evolved over time. It is believed that Columbus initially named the island of Antigua “Santa Maria la Antigua” after a church in Seville, the Church of St. Mary the Ancient. In 1536 the Barbuda Island was sighted by the Portuguese on a subsequent voyage and



feast day on which he discovered it. Subsequent Spanish sailors thought it looked very much like Granada in Spain and through continual usage that’s the name that stuck.

Columbus christened the island of Cuba “Juana” in honor of Prince Don Juan, son of Queen Isabella. The Indian name for the island was Cubanacan and eventually, for some reason, it was shortened to Cuba and adopted by the Spanish in later years.

Now let’s look at Trinidad and Tobago. The island of Trinidad was named for the Holy Trinity. The name Tobago was supposedly derived from the Carib word *tavaco*, which was the pipe the Carib natives used to smoke tobacco and which fascinated Columbus. An-

they called it as *Los Barbados*, presumably because the ubiquitous fig trees found there have a beard-like appearance. The word *barbuda* is Spanish for bearded and replaced the Portuguese name of *Los Barbados*. The island of *Dominica* was simply named for Sunday, the Lord’s Day, the day Columbus reached the island.

How about *St. Kitts and Nevis*? Recent studies suggest that Columbus named the island of *St. Kitts* “*Sant Yago*” (*St. James*) and the island of *Saba* “*San Cristóbal*” (*St. Christopher*) after his patron saint and the patron saint of travelers. As sometimes happens, the name *San Cristóbal* was erroneously inked beside the island of *St. Kitts* on the original chart. By the 17th

## island time

century it was well documented as San Cristóbal. The first English colonists used the English translation dubbing it St. Christopher's Island. A common nickname for Christopher at that time was Kit(t); hence the island was referred to as St. Kitt's Island, which was eventually shortened to simply St. Kitts. Columbus named the island of Nevis San Martin because he sighted it on St. Martin's Feast Day. By 1540 the name Nieves was used by the Spanish as an abbreviation for Santa Maria de las Nieves, meaning Our Lady of the Snows, which was a reference to the island's cloud cover that resembled snow, and the name stuck.

Columbus also named the island of St. Croix, calling it Santa Cruz (Holy Cross). The French occupied the island from 1650 to 1733 and called it by the French translation St. Croix. Both Santa Cruz and Saint Croix mean Holy Cross.

What about the Virgin Islands you may ask? Well believe it or not there is the Catholic Feast Day of St. Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins, the feast day on which Columbus discovered the island.

Then there is St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Christopher Columbus discovered the island of St. Vincent on the feast day of St. Vincent of Saragossa, the patron saint of Portugal, ergo the name. Columbus is believed to have named the Grenadines islands after the city of Granada in Spain.

Columbus also named Jamaica "Santiago" after St. James the Greater. However, the original native Arawak name was Xaymaca or Yamaya, and for some reason that name had staying power and eventually evolved into the name Jamaica.

St. Lucia was also named by Columbus who first sighted the island on the feast day of Santa Lucia (St Lucy).

According to legend, Columbus named the island of Puerto Rico "San Juan" (St. John) and the island's harbor Puerto Rico (Rich Port). When the names were inked on a chart, they were transposed and never corrected.

As a side note, Columbus explored parts of Venezuela but he did not name it. According to the most accepted theory, there was an expedition in 1499 that visited the Venezuelan coast. The navigator for the expedition was Amerigo Vespucci and when he saw the stilt houses around Lake Maracaibo, they reminded him of the city of Venice. Consequently, he named the region Veneziola, or Little Venice.

Christopher Columbus made four voyages across the Atlantic between 1492 and 1504 in search of a direct route to India, which he never found. He did, however, change a paradigm of history, leaving an indelible mark on both history and the Caribbean. 🇵🇷

## The 2021 ThirdEyePhotography Calendar

Montebello resident Miriam Rosenthal is offering her 20th annual desk calendar for sale.

Each month is an individual 5"x7" mini-poster printed on postcard stock. The images are based on photographs taken all over the country, although this year's calendar features 6 (if you include my cat) images taken right here at Montebello. As always, the images are a mix of the ever-popular florals and some personal takes of beautiful scenery.

The prices are \$15 for one calendar, \$12.50 each for 2 or more. If you have questions or would like to order please email Miriam at [thirdeyephotog@icloud.com](mailto:thirdeyephotog@icloud.com). Since we are all at Montebello, I'll be glad to drop them off at your unit or meet you at a socially distant place. Checks or cash only, please. 📅



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

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

## “Looking for a sign of intelligent life”



By *Mikhailina Karina*

**I** imagine a desk overflowing with papers, with more papers arriving each hour. All these papers contain important information, such as homework assignments and work-related updates, and need your attention. Buried on the bottom of this pile are pages with pass codes for entry into virtual classrooms – you manically dig each time you need them because they are glued to the desktop. When you get around to grading student work, you realize that you don't have a pen, don't know which assignments to grade, or who these students are. And then, in the middle of it all, someone tells you that your desk has a secret compartment where important papers have been accumulating since 2015, but no one bothered to tell you about this hidden cache. If you can imagine this nightmarish situation, then you can imagine how my first week of online schooling went.

I am an instructional assistant (misleadingly dubbed tutor) in our county's Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) college-prep elective classes. This is my ninth year working with high school students, many of whom come from immigrant families and may be the first to attend college. They are smart, kind, curious, hopeful young people working to close the socio-economic education gap. I deeply care about our students and admire their hard work, perseverance, and overcoming numerous obstacles. Last week I discovered that I need to work on my own perseverance and obstacle-overcoming skills when I logged on to my first online class.

AVID tutorials are based on collaborative inquiry in small groups. Students bring questions from their core academic classes and the group guides them toward finding an answer. My job is to facilitate the process and keep the group on track; no actual tutoring takes place, but students learn to work in study groups and use resources. It's an excellent concept that had to be adapted to virtual classrooms.

### **Basic (non) training**

One of my personal frustrations with AVID is how process-driven it is. On an academic level, I understand the need for a curriculum that provides a framework for instruction. Our training materials are filled with educational jargon and innumerable tables of checklists, rubrics, and lofty goals. This fall our training consisted of 8 hours of online modules that required us to watch videos or read text and then reply to prompts. One particularly memorable exercise was a word pyramid that describes how AVID tutorials function. After exhausting my internal database of synonyms, I filled the blanks with “this is a useless activity that does not contribute to any educational purpose it's just busywork waste of time” and secretly hoped my district bosses would see it. I felt like such a rebel in search of a cause. We spent hours on mind-numbing activities that included videos of perfect tutorials from engaged, prepared, bright-eyed students. Although I've been in numerous video-perfect situations with equally engaged and bright-eyed stu-

## school daze

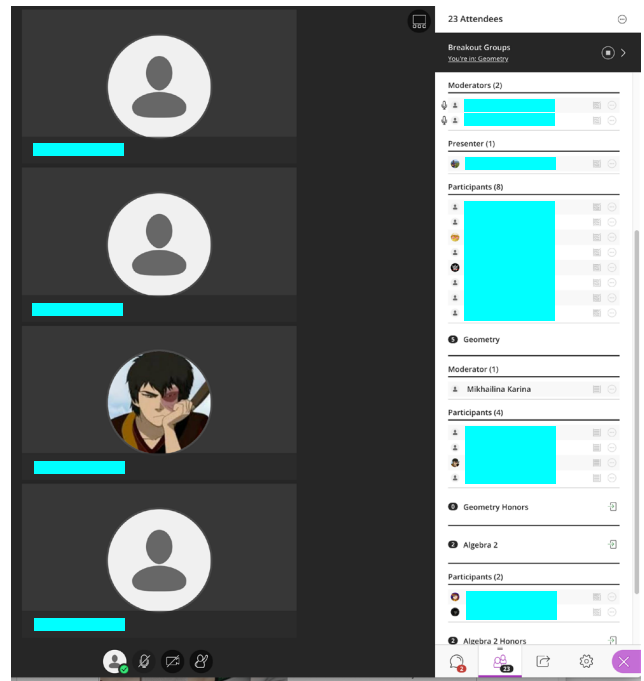
dents, I've also struggled with age-appropriate apathy, lack of preparation, and distractions.

After going through all these modules and more-or-less filling out the PDF worksheets (I confess that I BS-ed my way through), I was struck by the fact that nothing in the training mentioned the virtual environment and how instruction that was based on in-person group work and relationship-building would be adapted to our current reality. I figured I'd wait to address all this with our AVID teachers.

Most crucially, none of our 8 hours of modules and another hour-and-a-half of district training dealt with the mammoth in the room: technology. Our students are already familiar with Google Docs (<https://www.google.com/docs/about/>) and Blackboard (<https://www.blackboard.com>) platforms used for managing classwork. However, teachers use these platforms to varying degrees – some prefer more analog environments with passing out assignments, grading papers, and writing on the board. Over the summer, teachers had to adapt their materials and teaching to a virtual environment where nothing physical exchanges hands. In addition, the district is using certain high schools as test sites (i.e., guinea pigs) for Schoology Learning Management

Systems (<https://www.schoology.com>). Theoretically, Schoology communicates with Google Docs for managing assignments, notes, classwork, calendars, and resources. To make it even more fun, they use Google products, Pear Deck, a slides component, and Jamboard, a digital white board where students present their work. As tutors, we had heard of Google Docs and Blackboard, but we'd never used them as part of our job. Yet we were expected to pick up these IT skills on the fly. With zero training.

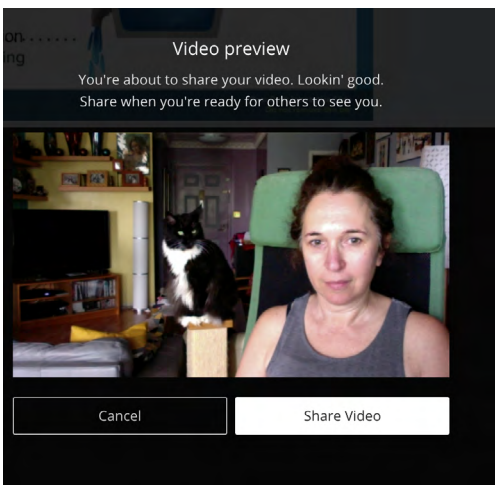
The first week was terrible. Teachers sent us invites for Blackboard collaboration sessions, which is where virtual classes are held. Most of the links worked and we entered classrooms where teachers talked into the void with students' microphones silent and cameras turned off. I had the hardest time finding an invitation to a class at Falls Church High School. After frantic searches through emails, the teacher told me to look in my fcpschools.net account. Huh? As far as I knew, my only district account was fcps.edu. What was she talking about? What Gmail account?? To my enormous shock tinged with anger, I learned that I had a Gmail account (in addition to Outlook) that was filled with Blackboard invitations and email messages from students going back to the Obama administration. Why didn't I know about this secret portal? (Because, my husband gently pointed out, I'd been ignoring all county messages that had IT update in the subject line. Oh, my bad.) It turns out, I wasn't the only one. So now I had messages arriving in two email accounts – messages from the district, from my seven AVID classes at



***Breakout groups in which student mics and cameras generally stay off***

three schools, and dozens of Schoology and Google assignments from students. Hence my earlier analogy about a desk with growing piles of papers and a hidden drawer. The links for Blackboard invitations were buried in earlier emails I'd managed to flag. I scrolled down my inbox to find them each time I needed to be in class. I was drowning.

Fortunately, top-notch technical support was in the next room. My husband, Jerome, is a software engineer fluent in C++ and the world of computer networks. I showed him the mess with all my emails in Microsoft Outlook and Gmail on Google Chrome. After expressing strong negative opinions (directed at the district IT people), he began making sense of my mayhem. First, he set up smart folders for each school and emails magically popped into their new homes. He set up bookmarks for Blackboard collaborations and links to Google classrooms. For two hours he clicked and dragged and cursed and organized strings of emails from teachers and students. I felt slightly better because now I had pass codes to most of my classes and everything was in folders. But we hadn't yet addressed the exciting new Schoology en-



***WYSIWYG: no make-up, unflattering lighting, exercise clothes, and a curious cat***

## school daze



### Checking in on the well-being

laboration, this radio silence is deafening and discouraging. The tutors I work with make a point of turning on our cameras

vironment that was still looming as the place for grading papers and checking virtual binders. In the waning days of October teachers were still spending class time on training students how to navigate portfolios, folders, uploads, and other IT concepts that are forcing our students to become amateur network administrators. Considering how much trouble I had with just getting access to files, not creating or manipulating them, I really feel it for the students who don't have someone with a doctorate in computer science on the other side of the wall. (A curious coincidence about Schoology – it was developed by three students at Washington University in St. Louis, where Jerome and I met while he was finishing his degree at the engineering school where I worked. Small world.).

### Into the void

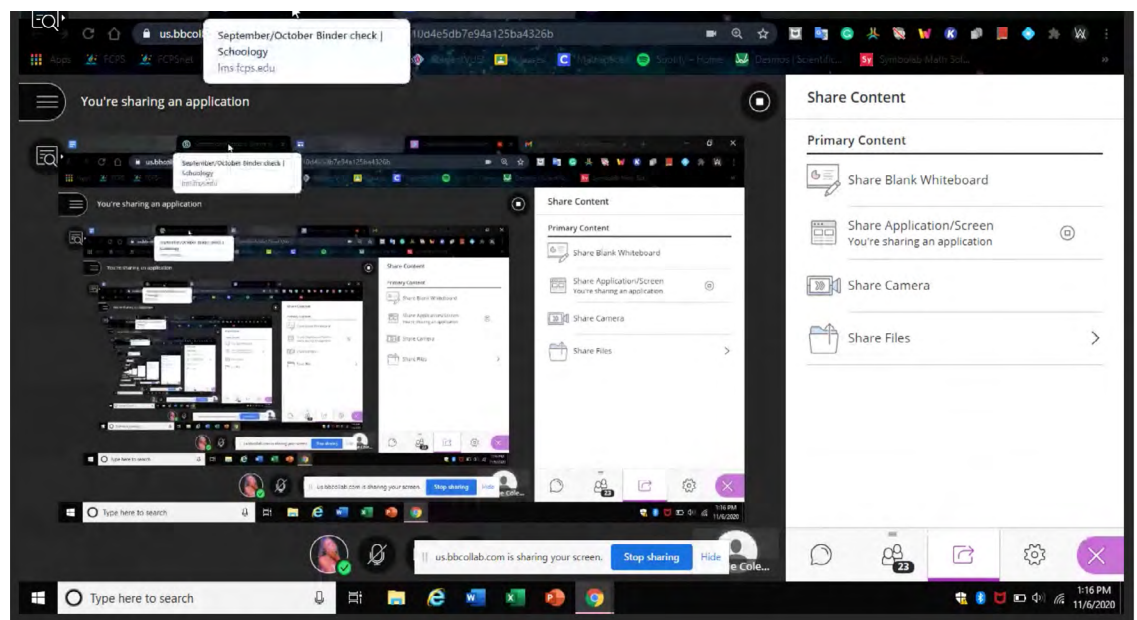
Overall, students refuse to turn on their microphones and cameras. We cannot compel them to do it because they may not want to show their home. Many students also have siblings doing distance learning nearby, younger children making noise, or family members talking. No session goes by without someone losing connection or having a technical malfunction. For a program that was predicated on group col-

and microphones to set an example and to let the students know that a human being is on the other side. Bafflingly, two of the teachers also choose to stay off-camera. I sit in front of my computer and stare into the void where student messages pop up with a droplet sound. Like a late-night DJ on a call-in show, I respond to these phrases as soon as they arrive. My stock phrase for making sure they're paying attention is "show me a sign of intelligent life," which results in thumbs-up emojis. But for all I know, they have another tab open to the reruns of Criminal Minds. In a classroom situation, we know the students are present in body and we can bring their minds back on task. In a virtual world, I don't know whose body is on the other

side of the void.

Speaking of being a DJ. Last week two of my classes were given class time to work on their virtual binders. I was in a break-out group with six or seven students and no one was talking or texting or showing a sign of life. So I switched over to YouTube and played Bob Marley, '80s pop, and classical guitar. Not even that netted any responses or feedback. Although I work only four hours a day, I walk away from these sessions physically and mentally drained. I don't understand why I am so exhausted from sitting in my chair and trying to talk to teenagers. It's not as if I have to plan lessons, deliver content, or grade work.

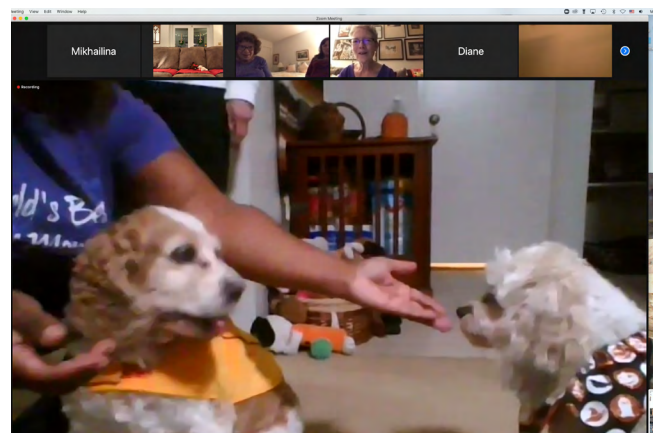
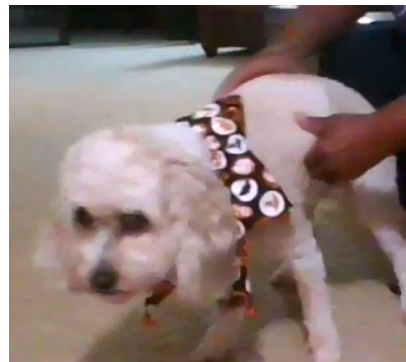
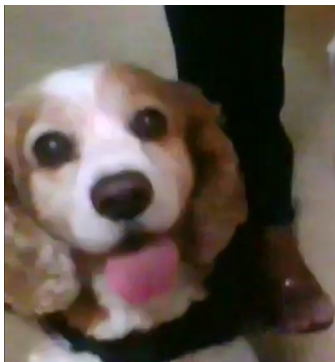
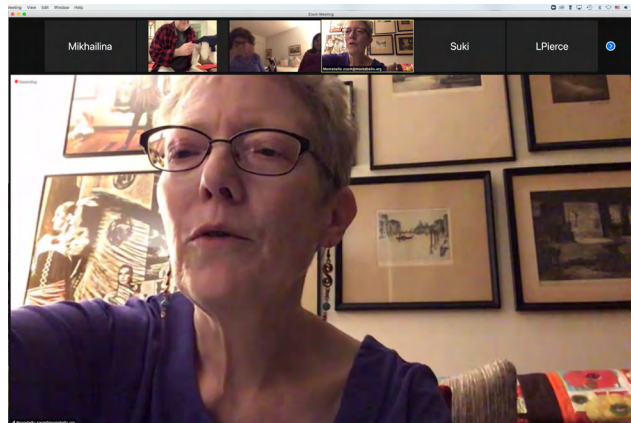
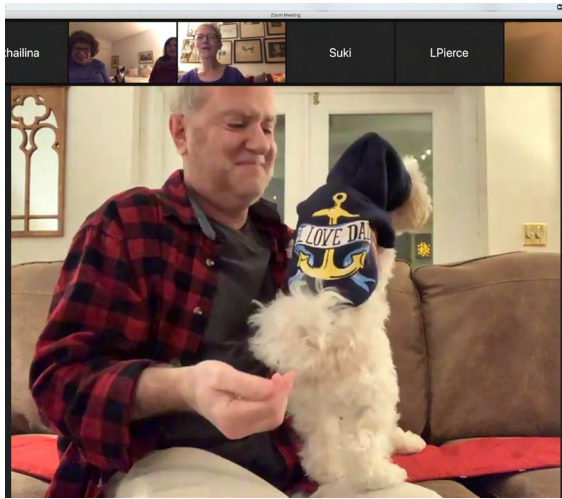
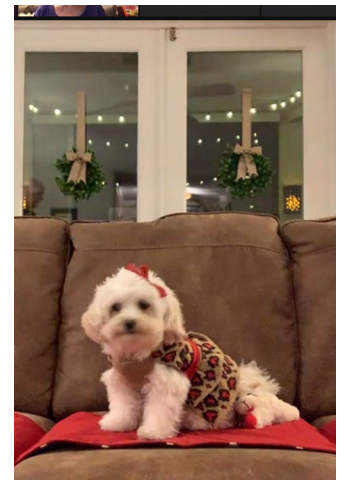
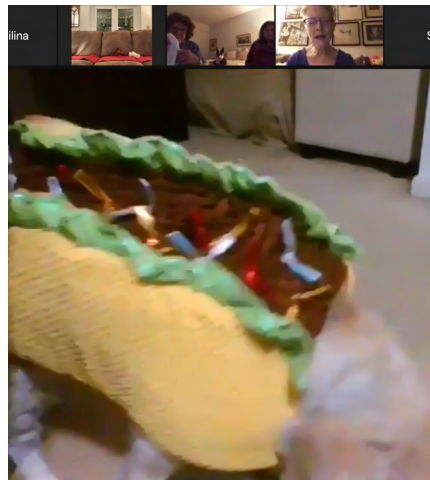
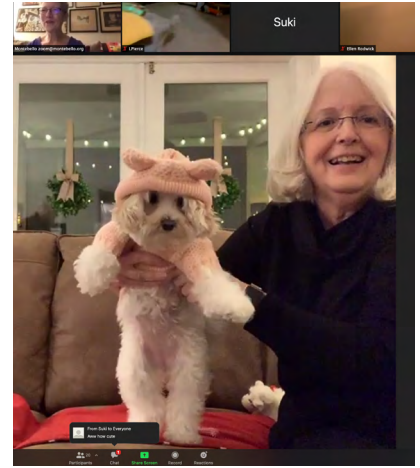
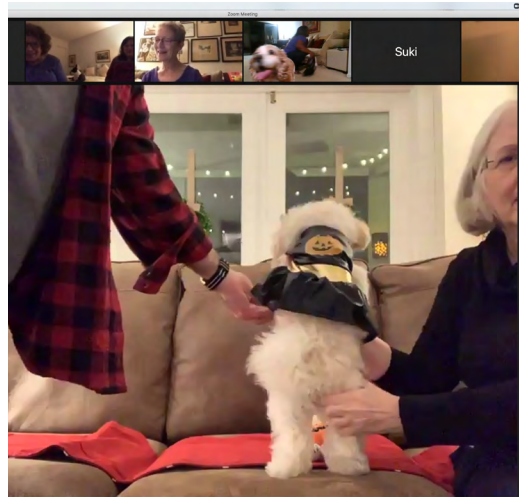
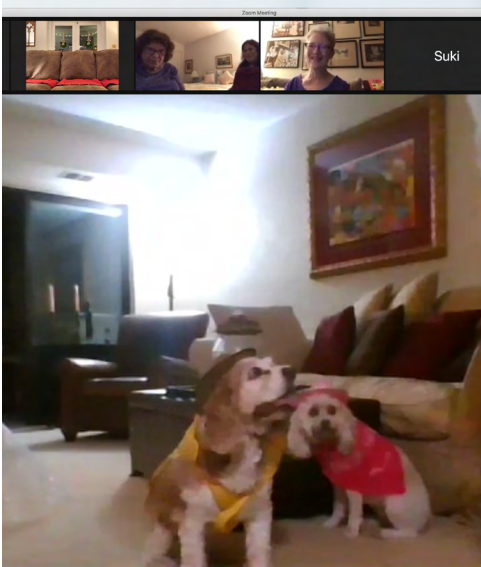
A few students figured out that I am a sympathetic talking head and share their sadness and fears. The freshman classes have it rough because they made a transition to a faster-paced, academically challenging high school classes that may be ill-suited to online instruction. With multiple learning styles, everyone is forced to adapt to one. I believe them when they complain that the teacher is going too fast or berates them for being confused. Complaints about occasional mean or incompetent teachers were often brought up in our



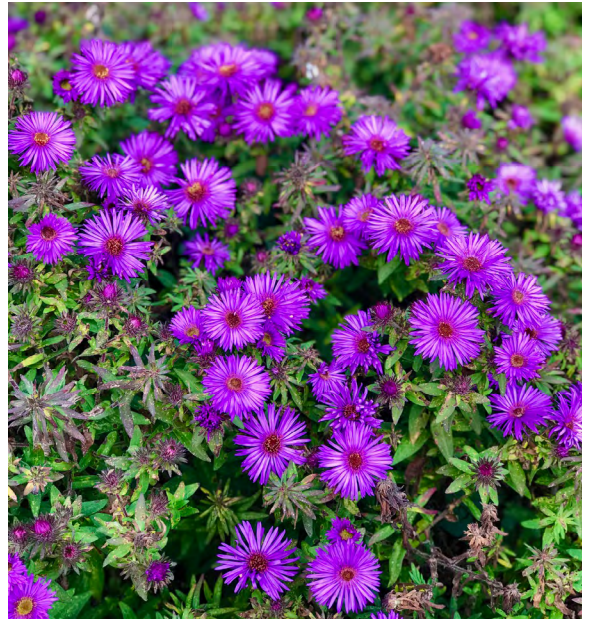
*Student shares her screen with the class. It's a little like being a game streamer and doing work in real time.*



# swag the dog



# autumn leaves





**Women's Club  
LUNCHEON at HOME**  
Friday, November 13th, at 12:00 Noon



👋 Welcome Back! 👋

This will be a new adventure! Of course, we regret not having our regular social gathering, but we didn't want to completely discontinue our quarterly luncheons. Someone has said that "life leads us to unexpected places." To adapt appears to be the new order of the day.

**LUNCHEON at HOME**

We will have lunch 🍴 in our own individual units and the Guest Speakers will deliver their talk via ZOOM! The **Montebello Cafe** will prepare lunches and have them ready for us to pick up our own lunch at the Cafe, between **11:15-11:45**. **Social Distancing, in the pickup line, will be observed. The menu will basically be the same, as before. The cost is \$10. Please have the exact cost. Before going to the cafe, please prepare your dining table to accommodate your favorite dishware, glassware, and silverware.** When you return home, please activate ZOOM. **The ZOOM directions will be emailed to you, one day in advance.** (You will be muted.) While we are enjoying lunch, we will watch a short film — **11:50-12:15**. The speakers will begin at approximately **12:20**. All members **will be muted** before and during lunch, until the Q & A period.

~\*~ A Review of the Agenda ~\*~

**11:15-11:45 a.m.** Please pick up your lunch from the **Montebello Cafe** with the exact cost of **\$10**. (Social distancing will be observed in the pickup line.)  
**11:50 a.m.** Activate ZOOM.  
**11:50 a.m.-12:15 p.m.** Watch a short film.  
**12:20-1:00 p.m.** Guest Speakers and Q&As.

If you are having lunch, please RSVP to Guin Jones at [gjones5@aol.com](mailto:gjones5@aol.com)

😊 Let's take this unique journey together 😊.

Organized by Guin Jones and Cheryl Silkwood

The Montebello Music Club presents  
*Official 2020 White House Christmas Ornaments*



Non-tarnishing 24k gold plated brass; metal with gold plating  
Size 3 3/4" x 3" Made in USA

This ornament honors John F. Kennedy, the thirty-fifth president of the United States. Before his presidency was cut short by an assassin's bullet, he had reinvigorated the American spirit. His legacy lives on in his youthful belief in America and his faith in America's responsibilities to the world. With this ornament we remember President Kennedy through his posthumous official White House portrait, made in 1970 by Aaron Shikler. The portrait, symbolic of his unfinished presidency, hangs in the White House today.

**Price is \$25 until October 31; \$27 after November 1**

Please contact your building representative to purchase:  
Bldg. 1 – Jane White – [janemariwhite@hotmail.com](mailto:janemariwhite@hotmail.com)  
Bldg. 2 – Yolande Frommer – [yonlarry@gmail.com](mailto:yonlarry@gmail.com)  
Bldg. 3 – Claudia Carpenter – [crpntrc@verizon.net](mailto:crpntrc@verizon.net)  
Bldg. 4 – Carol Comlish – [ccomlish@msn.com](mailto:ccomlish@msn.com)

The Speaker Series Presents:

**SENIOR SCAMS  
and HOW TO AVOID THEM**  
with Officer Marvin Goodley



Prevention Officer for the Mt. Vernon District Station where his role is to be the bridge between the community and the police department, **Officer Goodley** will focus on information that will help prevent seniors from becoming victims of scams.

He has served as a School Resource Officer at *Carl Sandburg Middle School, West Potomac High School and Bryant Alternative High School*, and as a Detective in the Criminal Investigation Section.

**Monday, November 16<sup>th</sup>**

**7:30 in the evening**

**Format: ZOOM**

Zoom information will be posted  
one day in advance

*Sponsored by the Activities Committee*

THE SPEAKER SERIES Presents

**CHRISTINE RIGGEN**  
Former Education Consultant  
Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM)



A seasoned educator who returned to this area in 2019 after a five-year stay in Oakland, CA, Christine Rikken recently completed a contract with the SAAM serving as an education consultant. She focused on building strategic relationships with DC public schools and community organizations to create and deliver programming to local teachers and students.

She will share exhibition highlights, convey information about resources that are housed within SAMM's education facilities, introduce digital offerings and also present a volunteer opportunity.

**Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>**

**7:30 in the evening**

**ZOOM information will be posted one  
day in advance**

*Sponsored by the Activities Committee*

