

# The MONTEBELLO Voice

an independent community gazette

spring forth

March 11, 2024





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*"6 ft 3 Quartet" performed on February 25. From left: Bob Thomas, Ron Baker, Larry Lilly, and Kurt Hayes  
 Photo by Dian McDonald*

**Read a poem to welcome Spring!**  
*Poetry Reading on April 20*

*By Donna Fowler*  
**Montebello Writers Group**

The Montebello Writers Group (MWG) will hold its 2<sup>nd</sup> annual informal poetry reading on April 20 from 4-5:30 p.m. in the Community Center Lounge. April is National Poetry Month, and all Montebello residents are invited to participate in celebrating the spoken word.

"We were delighted that some 40 people turned out for this event last year, and we now know that we have poets and poetry lovers among our neighbors," said MWG member Rebecca Long Hayden. "People were not shy about sharing their own work or simply bringing a poem to read."

Participants can bring a poem of

their choice to read: a poem they've written, a poem that intrigues them, a poem that's happy, sad, silly, serious.

"Some people came just to listen," said Kris Amundson, another MWG member. "It's a friendly, enthusiastic audience, and it's great fun."

The Montebello Writers Group welcomes all who love the written word, published and unpublished authors in any field, writers, and would-be writers. The group meets monthly. For more information, contact Kris Amundson ([kjamundson@gmail.com](mailto:kjamundson@gmail.com)); Rebecca Long Hayden ([viarebecca@aol.com](mailto:viarebecca@aol.com)); or Donna Fowler ([donnafoowler09@comcast.net](mailto:donnafoowler09@comcast.net)). 📧

*Cover photo by Don Savage*

**The** **MONTEBELLO** **Voice**

**an independent gazette**  
 Alexandria, Virginia

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Michael Copps, Donna Fowler, Bonnie Jacob, Dian McDonald, Don Savage, Bob Shea, Chester Taylor, Jeanne Tiff

**By Bonnie Jacob**

Like many residents, I have come to think of Montebello as an oasis. A natural woodland home to birds, squirrels and other critters in the midst of traffic, sirens and motels. A well-maintained and -managed residential property adjacent to some that do not have that comfort. A community whose developers thought hard about what amenities would support a good quality of life – and whose management, staff and volunteer directors work hard to maintain what we have.

By far, one of the developers' best decisions was to provide an on-site café – a place for residents and guests to eat and drink together, to host celebrations, to display our arts and crafts, to enjoy each others' company. Once upon a time, our café might have been thought of as a luxury. Today, with so much anger and violence all around, it feels much more like a necessity.

When I walk into that space or sit at the bar, I don't think about the political opinions, for example, of the person sitting next to me; I think about what I'm going to order. I smile and say hello to old friends and people I've never met. If I have to wait a while for dinner on a busy night, that's okay. Getting into an argument with the person who takes my order would be counterproductive. Turning it into a reason for community outrage seems, at best, excessive.

Here's the thing: the people who operate and staff our café are not our

servants or our underlings or our staff. They are owners and employees of a small business that provides an essential service to our community – a service that most of us appreciate and some of us depend on. They keep the café open seven days a week, 365 days a year, because they know that some of our residents would not have daily meals without them. That's why José or another chef has been known to spend the night here – maybe more than once – to be able to make and deliver meals during a snowstorm.

When our renovated Community Center opened and we welcomed our beautiful new café – now renamed the Grille – residents praised the spiffy décor, the open but intimate spaces, the upgraded output of an all-new kitchen. Mostly, we were shielded from the hard parts – including how difficult it has been to hire the help needed to meet the increased capacity and demand. I do know that the Grille owners worked long hours – still do – to give our community a pleasant place to gather, break bread and hoist a glass.

Regarding the current, very public, complaint about the Grille:

I have learned that it requires two parties to cause offense: one to give it and one to take it. This is an important insight, because sometimes – perhaps even most times – offense is taken where it is not intended, which can result in a lot of unnecessary pain.

Letting it go, on the other hand, almost always feels better. 🍷

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**By Jeanne Tiff**

I was shocked, not to say horrified, by the complaints about our café service detailed in the latest issue of *The Montebello Voice*.

I have lived here since 1987(!) and have patronized the café/grille regularly, especially since Ugur and Jose took it over. They have always been, to me, friendly, courteous, efficient, kind, and pleasant to chat with.

EXCEPT when a patron is rude to them, as I have overheard more than once. Neither will tolerate repeated

rude behavior from a Montebello patron, and I don't blame them. I suspect that Ms. Davila has treated one or both of them rudely.

Their food is pretty good, too. They do a lot with not much. (No ice cream freezer?? What's that about?) They don't really have enough serving staff at busy times, when they do everything themselves. I like them.

Please take steps that defend the Grille/Café service and encourage patrons to be considerate and polite to those who serve them. 🍷

## in defense of the Grille

*Following last month's article by Carmen Davila about the poor treatment she experienced from one of the proprietors of the Grille, three residents sent in their positive feedback about the restaurant and service.*

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**By Michael Copps**

Mark me down as a dedicated fan and frequent customer of The Montebello Grille. It is, for me, the amenity of amenities here at Montebello. My wife and I have lived here for nearly eight years and our experiences at the Grille have been invariably pleasant. We utilize the Grille at least once every week, and often more than that.

What's not to like? Excellent food at bargain prices in a lovely environment with optional (and free!) home delivery. Where else in all the city can you get a delicious filet mignon or rack of lamb dinner for \$20? Nowhere that I know. Every day the Grille offers attractive and well-prepared specials, along with a regular menu of selections to satisfy most anyone's palate.

Then there is the pleasant reception to which we are accustomed. Frankly, I am amazed that the waiters (who are also the proprietors) not only keep their cool through all the many challenges of managing a busy restaurant, but are on excellent terms with the vast majority of customers who continue to patronize them. The food usually comes quickly to table, but no one is ever rushed to finish and leave. These are two busy men with a small staff, and amidst all the hustle and bustle, we find them courteous, efficient, and a pleasure to deal with.

We residents don't sing their praises often enough, so next time you dine at the Grille, thank Jose and Ugur for providing us such a wonderful amenity. It makes Montebello shine. 🍷



## Hang on. It's 2024. 2.0

By Bob Shea

In January I wrote an essay full of doom and gloom about what we will probably endure during the calendar year 2024. After a final edit, I clicked on “send.” Later laying in bed and staring at the ceiling, I realized that I had been much too kind to 2024, omitting some actual or potential events that do not need a crystal ball to predict but which will be in the headlines and on TV as Breaking News. None of it is good.

Consequently this additional insight into what I see as a very bad year. Hang on, it's 2024, 2.0.

Despite what some politicians say, Covid-19 and all its variants are still with us. During the week of January, over 26,000 Americans were admitted to hospitals with Covid. That does not include the thousands who had Covid but were not sick enough to be hospitalized or who died of related problems. This is despite over two years of vaccine availability to include a new booster just last fall. Just 1 in 5 Americans have availed themselves of the latest vaccine. Do we just not care about our health, are we just dumb, or have the anti-vaxxers converted us? Maybe we can discuss this as we wait in the ER.

Artificial intelligence will touch all of us in some way. Teachers will receive papers written by a smart computer app. IDs will be stolen and bank accounts drained. Voters will see and hear ads that show images and say things that were created in a lab. We will be forced to question everything: Is that really he/she? Is that what was really said? Facts and reality will take a backseat in 2024.

In a recent Congressional hearing with five high-tech CEOs at the wit-

ness table, there was growing consensus among both parties that parents should be able to sue the high-tech giants when their children are harmed by social media platforms. The theme was that the companies are making big money and are blind to the harm that unfiltered social media sites cause unsuspecting children and teens.

However, these same politicians loudly condemn any suggestion that gun manufacturers should be held responsible for any harm that their products

2024 be the year when our only solution is to continue to look toward heaven and mutter “thoughts and prayers?” When we hold candle light vigils and swap hugs? When we blame mental distress as the sole root cause? I hope not, but I know that I am wrong.

A common thesis among some is that the “only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is to have a good guy with a gun.” Ask the children and staff in Uvalde if that worked when over 450 heavily armed Texas Rangers, local, state, and federal law enforcement officers waited 77 minutes to storm a classroom where there was just one “bad guy with just one gun” surrounded by dead and bleeding children and staff.

Throw a dart at a map of the USA, and it will land within 100 miles of where there will be a mass shooting in 2024. Think about it. No school, business, or community is im-

mune. This is 2024.

If all that does not convince you that it will be a tough year, think about the latest paranoid, tinfoil hat-wearing, outlandish conspiracy theory that is gaining attention among people who should know better. It is this: there is a giant conspiracy theory to make the 2024 election invalid involving the National Football League, the Super Bowl, the two best NFL teams, tight end Travis Kelce, the Democratic party, and Taylor Swift. That is 2024 on steroids. Remember Chicken Little and the falling sky? I would bet on Chicken Little first.

I ended my first essay with the words “Buckle up, say a prayer, and be ready for one hell of a year.”

Remember, you were warned. Say another prayer! 🙏



ness cause to unsuspecting children and teens. As you enter the House or Senate chambers, please check your brain at the door. We see 2024 logic at its best.

With moral indignation on both sides of the issue, we will be in a forum on multiple social issues and politics. Regardless of one's position of reproductive rights, I see an interesting dichotomy that can tear apart families, churches, and society in general. It begs the question: Why do those who so strongly support the rights of the unborn, the precious unborn, also want to forgo or cut most social programs that might assist these babies to become healthy, educated, law-abiding productive adults? Concern seems to wither as soon as the baby is born. Welcome to 2024.

The list is too long: Columbine, Newtown, Buffalo, Lewiston, El Paso, Uvalde, Oxford. It goes on and on. Will

## Morally and mentally unfit

By Chester Taylor

Donald Trump is morally and mentally unfit to serve as President of the United States. He does not represent the values or norms of hard-working Americans who pay their taxes and believe in family values, law and order, and democracy. He has no concept of integrity, justice, or honor. He speaks in childlike words and phrases that are often untrue, exaggerated, insulting, or vulgar. Most Americans do not want a president who has been found liable for sexual battery and tax fraud and is an oath-breaking insurrectionist. Nor do they want a president who favors murderous dictators like Putin, turns his back on democratic countries fighting for their freedom, and undermines the unity of NATO.

A sexual predator is one who has repeatedly committed sexual assault or other sex-related crimes. Donald Trump has been accused of sexual misconduct by 26 women. On May 9, 2023, a Manhattan jury found him liable for the sexual assault of columnist E. Jean Carroll. Carroll testified that she struggled to get Trump off her as he shoved his mouth on hers, yanked her tights down, and sexually assaulted her. Trump's denial of events lack credibility given his reputation for being a pathological liar and boasting about groping and kissing women without their consent. Trump, a grandiose narcissist, stated that a star like me, "can do anything." The jury found Trump liable for sexual battery (rape in most states) and defamation in this case and awarded Carroll \$5 million. Shortly afterwards, Trump was found liable by another jury for continuing to defame Carroll and awarded her \$83.3 million. Trump continues to defame Carroll and another civil suit may result.

In Trump's New York business fraud

case, Trump was found guilty on 17 counts of criminal tax fraud centering around a 15-year tax evasion scheme. The scheme allowed Trump to skip out on taxes worth \$1.76 million. Trump also falsified financial records to get loan approvals with cheaper interest. The court-appointed special monitor, former federal judge Barbara Jones, laid out inconsistent and incomplete disclosures of income of Trump's business organizations in a letter to Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Arthur Engoron in August 2021. Then in another letter to Judge Engoron in January 2024, Jones detailed a fake loan of \$48 million to avoid taxes to a company named Chicago Acquisition Unit. This



shell company had no employees, no offices, and supposedly was headquartered in Trump Tower Chicago. The court ordered Trump to pay \$354.9 million and banned him from doing business in New York for three years. As usual, Trump says he will appeal.

In an upcoming criminal case, Trump is indicted for manipulating business records to hide payments to pay former Playboy model Karen McDougal and porn star Stormy Daniels, hush money in the amount of \$280,000 to prevent damaging information from surfacing

during the 2016 presidential campaign. Trump allegedly made the payments to his lawyer, Michael Cohen, who then reimbursed a third party for payments to the women. Then the payments were grossed up into Cohen's legal fees. The Manhattan District Attorney has charged Trump with 34 criminal felony counts in the indictment with the trial date set for March 25, 2024. Trump has three more criminal trials to face after this one.

Leader of America's first coup attempt, Trump took actions to overturn the elections, including phone calls to Michigan, Arizona, and Georgia asking for more votes than he had. He couldn't force the judicial system to declare him the 2020 winner, so he leaned on the head of the Justice Department, William P. Barr, who also refused. He claimed falsely that the voting machines malfunctioned, then he created alternate slates of electors. He tried to pressure Vice President Mike Pence not to certify the election. Finally, Trump encouraged his MAGA followers to assault the Capitol on January 6, 2021, to "stop the steal." As a result, 140 Capitol police officers were injured, and six others later died from medical conditions connected to the attack. It could have been a blood bath had the MAGA thugs brought their AR-15 assault rifles

instead of storing them at their Quick Reaction Force hotel in Virginia (remember Trump wanted the Secret Service to remove the weapon detection magnetometers at the Ellipse). Trump continues to make false and misleading claims about the 2020 election. He faces two criminal trials and two civil trials in connection with these events.

Trump is hellbent on revenge and has made statements aimed at destroying our democratic processes and institutions. He believes as president he has full executive immunity to do whatever



he wants, even arrest or execute political opponents as Putin did to Navalny. Trump is dividing the country and turning foreign allies against us. He sabotaged the Senate bipartisan border deal and halted the military assistance funding to Ukraine. He would encourage Russia to “do whatever the hell they want” if NATO members do not reach 2% of their GDP target for defense spending. Currently, 22 of the 31 NATO members have not reached this goal, but most of these offer other services to offset the monetary difference. Further, since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the other 30 members have donated at least \$80 billion worth of military, humanitarian, and financial aid to Kyiv.

Trump dismissed a record-breaking

number of top civilian and military officials responsible for our nation’s security during his first year of presidency. He claims he knows more than the generals, and as Commander in Chief, is the sole authority to order a launch of our nuclear weapons. His lack of strategic thinking and restraint could easily lead us into nuclear annihilation. Remember how detached from reality Trump was when he lost the 2020 election? General Milley, then the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had to reassure China we weren’t going to launch a nuclear attack against them. Trump stated that Milley should be executed for his treason. General Milley, after 40 years of service to this country, stated in his retirement speech referring to Trump, that the US Armed Forces

serve the Constitution, not “wannabe dictators.”

Marine General John Kelly, the longest-serving White House chief of staff for Donald Trump, described Trump, this way: “Trump is not a truthful person.” He has “no idea what America stands for.” He disrespects the military and veterans [called them suckers and losers even at their grave sites] and “admires autocrats and murderous dictators.” Trump “has nothing but contempt for our democratic institutions, our Constitution, and the rule of law.” If Trump is elected, “God help us.” 🙏



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*A twice-monthly publication for the residents, by the residents*  
*uncut, uncensored, unofficial*





Photos by Dian McDonald

