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For this modern home in DC, Wouter Boer Architects envisioned the entire lot as the house, blurring the boundaries between indoors and out.

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The banana split—with banana ice cream, a waffle-cone basket, and more—at Surreal in National Landing.



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The US Botanic Garden, on our summer bucket list, is open till 6 through August.



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WE ASKED OUR STAFF:
What's your BBQ go-to: hamburger or hot dog?

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"Hot dogs are perfect for a barbecue. The best burgers are cooked indoors on a flat-top."

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"Hot dog with mustard, and the more toppings, the better."

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"Hamburger—except at baseball games—because you get more."

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"Hamburger, because I've never really been clear on what's in a hot dog."

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"Smash burger with Colby American cheese, mayo, lettuce, and pickles. Leave the hot dogs for the kids."

"A plant-based hot dog. Vegetarians like BBQs, too!"

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"Team hot dog all the way—with relish, mustard, and ketchup. Burgers always get overcooked at barbecues."

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PHOTOGRAPH OF BURGER BY ATLAS STUDIO/GETTY IMAGES; HOT DOG BY JAMES AND CARRIE MILLS/500PX/GETTY IMAGES



Phone Flip

WHO AMONG US DOESN'T SOMETIMES wish we could summon the willpower to log off social media, toss our phone, and never look back? Ironically, one person who has managed to do it is a 31-year-old tech CEO named Danny Hogenkamp—ditching his online profiles, swapping his smartphone for a dumb one, and leading the DC chapter of the Luddite Club, a nonprofit for like-minded people. In the June issue, Washingtonian's Jessica Sidman profiled Hogenkamp—and tried unplugging herself. Here's what our very online readers had to say on Instagram.

—IKE ALLEN

“Genius idea! He won’t see the replies and won’t have to give a darn!”
—@naydine8

“Your time is your currency, he’s spending his wisely.” —@tess_elizabeth1

“He’s about to get all the ladies for this one. We love a man with no social media.” —@amyelizabethlmt

“... All those saying how funny it is that he won’t see this are missing the point. We are addicted to validations from social, even if intermittent, much like Pavlovian training. To free your brain

space for actual connection and physical projects is great. I did a detox in January and my anxiety was way less and I was more focused. Do some reading about how social media manipulates your brain wiring. It’s fascinating and also a little scary. I am tempted to join him.”
—@raecanfit

“After reading about Spotify’s CEO I’m seriously about to get a Walkman and boom box again like back in 1995. I just can’t anymore with funding the pockets of billionaires based on blind convenience. The thought of texting again on a flip-phone stresses me out though lol. But that’s the detox of it all.”
—@djedjedjeli_

“I prefer to use self mastery. I’m not on my phone most of the day and check [it] in pockets. But kudos to the flip phoners who have to press buttons multiple times for a letter lol. . . .”
—@sugartaylorco

“I’d miss out on so many artists, book recommendations, cute animals, DIY ideas, moving causes, connections with friends, and hilarious memes. People frame social media as this horrible thing but honestly my life is richer for it.”
—@goodluckcleo



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CAPITAL COMMENT

WHITE HOUSE ART CRITICS

Anonymous artists are engaged in an odd public conversation with the Trump administration. For more, turn to page 14.



PHOTOGRAPH BY KATIE DORAN



Baron at the Lorton gym where he practices

American Ninja Warrior, the obstacles require much more strength and endurance, and there's also the pressure: cameras rolling, lights in your face, a pool of water below.

When Baron was 11, growing up in Ashburn, his family decided to try out a ninja gym for his little brother's birthday. Baron took to it immediately. "I just really loved conquering the obstacles," he told me. Around that time, he also started a nonprofit, Knot Perfect, which raises money to feed the hungry. In 2022, when he was 16, he applied for *American Ninja Warrior*, hoping to raise money for Knot Perfect. In his first appear-

ance, on season 15, he says he fundraised enough for 40,000 meals. Now he's returned for season 17—and this time he's advanced to the finals, which will air in August.

On Baron's practice course, I could complete a couple of the obstacles (the balance bars, the quad steps), but at the end, he'd set up a series of rings five or six feet apart. There was no way this was going to be possible for me, so I had Baron do it instead. Watching him was remarkable; he's unassuming in stature, but wiry and quietly muscular. Swinging from the rings, he was so poised and controlled. It looked almost superhuman up close. Afterward, he told me his ninja skills help him in all areas of his life, whether he's fighting hunger or studying business analytics at Notre Dame. "On the show, you're tackling obstacles," he explained. "And we all have obstacles in our lives, so the courses are a great way to remind yourself that you can conquer things just by working hard." —SYLVIE McNAMARA

Swing and a Prayer

We trained with *American Ninja Warrior* contestant Austin Baron

"ASK ME HOW MANY PULL-UPS I CAN do," I said to **Austin Baron**, a 19-year-old competitor on the current season of NBC's extreme obstacle-course show, *American Ninja Warrior*.

"How many?" he asked.

"Zero."

This was going to be a problem. I was at Baron's ninja gym—Vertex Labs Academy, a low-slung warehouse space in a Lorton industrial park—where he'd set up a baby version of the courses on the show. There would be jumping and hanging and swinging and leaping. I wasn't sure I could do any of it at all.

Sure enough, faced with swinging between three hanging objects, I choked. On

my initial attempt, I grabbed the first and immediately fell. In order to reach the next one, Baron explained, I needed to use my core and legs to swing my body and launch myself into the air. When I tried, I touched it but lost my grip. "That's a really hard grab," he said to console me. On my third attempt, I made it partway, but then the last object seemed so far away that I couldn't even fathom reaching it. My arms hurt. My hands felt nearly raw. I was hanging by my fingers, trying to kick my legs. When I leapt for it, I hit the foam mat on all fours.

"How difficult is this compared to what's on the show?" I asked.

"Oh, this is probably a bit easier," Baron said, drastically understating the truth. On

A Welcome Return

This season, the Commanders will play three games in new "Super Bowl era" alternate uniforms, which are similar to ones worn during the glory years (minus the old name and logo). Longtime fans are thrilled. Could these become the primary design down the road?



TOP PHOTOGRAPH BY EYV IMAGES; BOTTOM BY KOURTNEY CARROLL/WASHINGTON COMMANDERS

Getting Jiggy

We went to check out a major Irish-dance competition, held in our area this year



Dancers put a ton of time and effort into hair and makeup prior to the competition.



A makeup room was open for use starting at 5 AM.



With their costumes finally perfect, competitors watch as they wait their turn.



A team shows off its purple finery.



Dancers behind a curtain backstage.



A view from backstage of a team performing in front of the judges.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY EVY IMAGES



Michael Nardolilli helps protect the Potomac River.

Aqua Man

In the event of a drought or other threat to our water, he makes difficult decisions

DC WAS UNDER A DROUGHT WATCH FOR almost a year before conditions improved earlier this summer. That might not have made a huge impression on most residents, but for **Michael Nardolilli** it was a big deal. He's executive director of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, created by Congress in 1940 to help manage and protect the river—and, therefore, the city's water supply. If drought conditions had persisted to the point where there wasn't enough water for drinking, showers, fire suppression, or sustaining the river's aquatic life, it would have been his responsibility to deal with it. The Garbage song "Only Happy When It Rains" should be his personal anthem, he likes to joke.

In the worst-case scenario, Nardolilli would be the one to make the decision to tap our emergency water reserves, asking the US Army Corps of Engineers, which manages the Washington Aqueduct, to release the water. Millions of gallons would be let loose from Jennings Randolph Lake, about 170 miles from the city. Then we would wait: Water from this reservoir takes nine days to travel down the Potomac before residents can use it.

Thankfully, that's a call Nardolilli has never had to make. But it's one of many operational decisions that he and the ICPRB

have to plan for. Arlington, Falls Church, and DC are the most vulnerable jurisdictions in the country because they have only one source of water. That means if the Potomac were to become fouled by accidental or intentional contamination, the river as a means of water conveyance could be shot. Droughts are especially complicated; if Nardolilli decided to release the backup supply and the weather changed to rain, the effort could be for nothing. "These are the issues that keep me up at night," he says.

Nardolilli, who grew up in Jersey City, spent 20 years as a corporate lawyer in DC. He decided to change direction after one of his kids asked what he did for a living and he realized his job was mostly about money. Thinking about the pro bono work he'd done related to ecological conservation sparked an epiphany: "I could flip this and make environmental work primary for the second half of my life," he recalls. That led to almost three decades in leadership jobs at places like the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, the C&O Canal Trust, the Montgomery Parks Foundation, and the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority. Since 2019, Nardolilli has overseen the Rockville-based ICPRB.

Moving forward, his job will only get harder as climate change makes conditions more variable and less predictable. Low-flow toilets and showerheads are helping, Nardolilli notes, and the Army Corps of Engineers is studying options for greater local water resiliency, such as acquiring a quarry for additional water storage. But a major drought that threatens our supply is due at some point. "I'm an optimistic guy," he says, "but I'm concerned." —SUE EISENFELD

TRUMP ART HITS A NERVE

Anonymous artists have been mocking Donald Trump with satirical statues on the Mall, and the White House is taking the bait. Here's a look at the weird back-and-forth.

—KATIE DORAN



ARTISTS THUMB THEIR NOSES

In June, a sculpture of a giant gold hand crushing Lady Liberty's head appears. The podium features quotes from dictators praising Trump.

THE WHITE HOUSE RESPONDS

A spokesperson calls the statue an "eye-sore" but tells the *Washington Post*, "In the United States of America you have the freedom to display your so-called 'art,' no matter how ugly it is."



THINGS GET "UGLY"

Another statue shows up—apparently in response to the "ugly art" quote, which is written on the podium. A TV shows a loop of Trump dancing. In an interview, someone claiming to be one of the artists says it's "the ugliest art we could think of."

THE LAST WORD?

A White House spokesperson can't resist weighing in again, saying the artists "are dumber than I thought" and that she "tricked them" into putting up "a beautiful video of the President's legendary dance moves."

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GOING DUTCH

How DC's attorney general got so skilled at jumping rope

First he bunny-hopped. Then he crisscrossed. Then he twirled. During the recent Open Streets DC event on Capitol Hill, DC attorney general **Brian Schwalb** impressed spectators with his surprising double-Dutch talents. So how did the AG get so good at jumping rope? "When I would go to the rec center for summer when I was a kid, one of the activities was double Dutch," Schwalb explains. "Probably alongside, you know, lip-synching and tie-dye and other things you do as a kid at a rec center."

Many years later, when Schwalb was campaigning for his current job, he was in Anacostia Park and "got asked to give it a try," he recalls. "So I jumped back in, and I hadn't forgotten a thing." Now he bunny-hops in whenever he has the chance—though he's not used to getting so much attention for it. A clip of his latest rope-jumping was shared on Instagram and has gotten tens of thousands of likes—as well as some cracks at his expense. He's okay with "being the object of some people's jokes." Noting that this is a time with a lot of heaviness, he says sometimes it's nice just to be "out in the community and jumping rope." —FRANZISKA WILD

Voices of Change

An effort to help software better understand Black speech

LUCRETIA WILLIAMS, A RESEARCHER at Howard University, is regularly interviewed about her work, and she's noticed that her quotes sometimes aren't quite right (the "-ed" might get dropped from a word, for example). She attributes this issue to transcription technology, which—like all voice-recognition software—can struggle with Black speech. That's a problem that she and her team are now trying to address. Williams has spent much of the past two years leading an effort to help voice-recognition technology better understand Black voices.

A partnership between Howard and Google, Project Elevate Black Voices, as it's called, is an effort to broaden the data sets that teach software to recognize human speech. Black speech hasn't traditionally been well represented, leading the systems to struggle with the unique grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary of African American English. The result is that Black speakers using voice-driven AI tools and other technologies often encounter responses like "I'm not sure I understand."

The idea for Project Elevate Black Voices was originally hatched by another Howard professor, **Gloria Washington**, and Google researcher **Courtney Heldreth**. (Google is funding the project.)

Tools like Siri and Amazon's Alexa interpret and respond to commands like "Play Beyoncé," but a 2020 study found that top-tier voice-interpretation systems have higher error rates for Black users than for white ones—a 22 percent gap for Apple, 15 percent for Amazon, and 12 percent for Google. Williams says this forces many Black Americans to address these pieces of technology in standard English. "You shouldn't have to code-switch when you talk to your personal devices," she says.

To help solve that issue, Williams and her team recruited more than 530 African Americans across 32 US states to participate. "Oftentimes, when research is done like this in vulnerable communities, the researchers get more out of it than the actual participants," Williams says. In this case, participants received up to \$599 for three weeks of answering questions, and the team is being careful with how it uses the material it has collected. The data is currently available only to Google and to historically Black colleges and universities



that apply for access for specific projects. Howard is maintaining ownership in order to ensure that it isn't misused in ways that would compromise privacy or otherwise harm participants.

As a result of all that collection effort, Project Elevate Black Voices has now created a data set of 600 hours of responses to questions like "What are your hobbies?" A Black-owned transcription company then processed all the recordings, and Google will use them to improve its offerings.

That's just the first stage of the project, Williams says. The hope is to expand the data set to include additional dialects from across the African diaspora that are spoken in the United States. "When certain voices don't get understood, it is a problem," says Williams. "You shouldn't have to feel excluded from the technologies that you use and pay for."

—LINDSEY BYMAN



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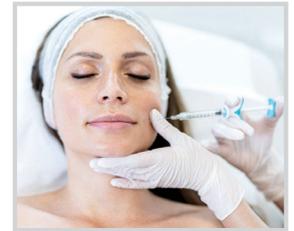
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Map Quest

An artist roamed DC for months to make this quirky drawing

ARTIST GARETH FULLER LIKES GETTING LOST. TO RESEARCH his latest work—an intricate, hand-drawn map of DC—he spent three months in 2023 doing exactly that, roaming the city to get a feel for the place. Fuller walked to about 25 of the District’s 40 historic boundary stones. He spent a day wandering from Bethesda down to Alexandria. He meandered along the banks of the Anacostia River. He developed a slight obsession with strolling each of the city’s diagonal avenues.

Born in Wales, Fuller has lived in London and other cities, working in a variety of jobs including video production. He now

travels and makes these maps, which he calls his Purposeful Wanderings series. “Wayfinding”—the act of walking without guidance—is central to his artistic process. The DC map, which he sells on his website (GarethFuller.com), is his first in the US, following maps of three other capitals: Pyongyang, Beijing, and London. “It felt like I had to go to Washington because all eyes were on the city,” he says. “It’s the seat of power, and we’ve heard so much about it around the world. I wanted to understand more.” In addition to streets and buildings, the map offers some quirky visual commentary. Here’s a closer look.

—FRANZISKA WILD

Marking espionage exploits: Rather than just depict the CIA headquarters in McLean, Fuller chose to illustrate some of the Agency’s more eccentrically named work, such as Operation White Giant and Project Artichoke.

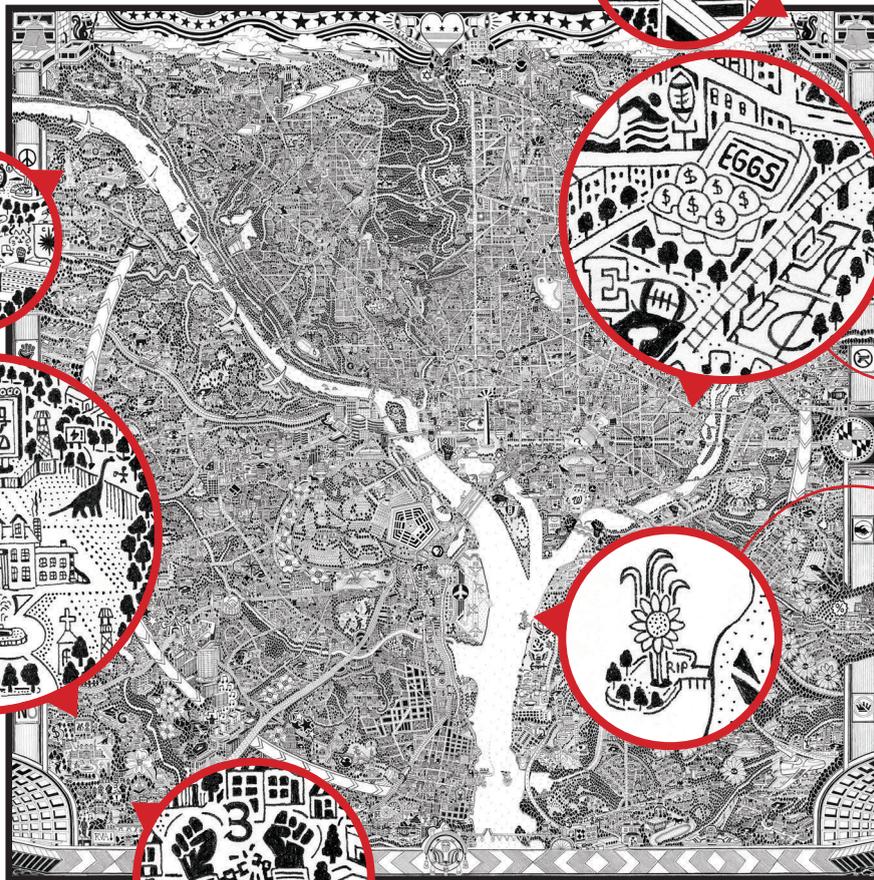
Fending off animals: Fuller’s encounters with DC’s squirrels left quite an impression. He describes them as “without a doubt, the most spicy, feisty, and sneaky squirrels” after they chased him for his lunch one day.

Paying more for groceries: When Fuller was re-researching the map, the price of eggs was skyrocketing and had become a significant item of discussion as the presidential election began to heat up.

Remembering victims of a crash: Though it happened after Fuller finished his walking tours, the recent deadly plane accident over the Potomac is memorialized with this sunflower. It’s the state flower of Kansas, where the flight originated.

Gripping about the gerontocracy: Inspired by conversation at the time about the presidential candidates being too old, Fuller imagined a retirement home for Presidents. It’s White House-shaped and has a golf course.

Grappling with the past: Black Power fists scattered throughout the map commemorate aspects of the region’s Black history. These ones mark Lincolnia, Virginia, which was founded as a community of formerly enslaved people following the Civil War.



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Guest List

A monthly roundup of people we'd like to have over for drinks, food, and conversation

Thelmetria Michaelides

She's been named the new fire chief of Prince George's County.



Catherine Oakar

FreshFarm, which runs farmers markets around the area, appointed her to be its executive director.



Adam T. Erby

At Mount Vernon, he's now executive director of historic preservation and collections.



Michael Retta

He's been tapped to lead the renovation of the East Potomac Tennis Center.



Audrey Fix Schaefer

The publicist for the Anthem and 9:30 Club is the new board president of the National Independent Venue Association.



Pwock Stars

Three prominent women launch a pickleball line

MOORLOW IS A DC-BASED pickleball athleisure brand that came out of a conversation among three local friends. In 2023, former Fox 5 anchor **Holly Morris Espy**, THE Artist Agency casting director **Sondra Hoffman**, and brain-health advocate **Brooks Kenny** were having a wide-ranging chat while hanging out at Espy's house in Chevy Chase. Two topics they touched on were of particular interest: advances in brain health and how the fashion world hadn't kept up with the explosion of pickleball. That led them to hatch an idea for an athleisure line with a wellness focus. They soon decided to make it an

actual business. "There are risk factors you can control to reduce your risk of cognitive decline," says Kenny. "Exercise is number one, and social connection is also important—both of which pickleball provides."

The company launched in May, offering dresses, tops, shorts, and other items made out of performance fabric and featuring a signature pattern meant to evoke both a brain wave and the bounce of a pickleball. Brain-health education tips are included in all the packaging, and \$2 of every purchase is donated to charity. One distinctive feature is Moorlow's pockets, which distinguish the clothes from, say,



tennis outfits in that they're designed for the size and weight of a pickleball. "You can eat salad off a dinner plate, but somewhere along the line, someone created a salad plate," says Hoffman. "We're doing the same thing with pickleball." The brand has already gotten Instagram shout-outs from DC influencers as well as national personalities like **Alyssa Farah Griffin** of *The View*.

The pieces aren't cheap (dresses start at \$228), but they're meant to be versatile enough to work both at brunch and on the court. Moorlow's line of athletic clothing is available at Moorlow.com. Of course, you don't have to have a \$148 skort to play the sport—all that's really required is two racquets and a ball. Target will sell you a set for \$19.99.

—AMY MOELLER

PHOTOGRAPH OF RETTA BY MATT MENDELSON; OTHERS COURTESY OF SUBJECTS; ATHLEISURE COURTESY OF MOORLOW



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Making a Splash

IT WAS A SCORCHING JUNE DAY, WITH temperatures in the upper 90s and a heat index well north of 100. Banneker Pool—on Georgia Avenue near Howard University—is one of the Department of Parks and Recreation’s most popular swimming facilities, and residents beat the afternoon heat by playing in the cool water.

PHOTOGRAPH BY EVY MAGES







Dan About Town

Party photographer Dan Swartz's monthly roundup of bashes, balls, and benefits

▼ WorldPride 2025 Pride Brunch at the Four Seasons Hotel June 1



Plastique Tiara of *RuPaul's Drag Race* (second from right) with Khoa Nguyen, Austin Phillips, and Christina Criss of the Four Seasons

▼ Washington AI Network Inaugural AI Honors Gala at the Waldorf Astoria June 3



Wayne K. Williams, deputy chief of staff to Democratic House leader Hakeem Jeffries; Rachel Scott of ABC News; Olivia Igbokwe-Curry of Amazon Web Services; and Congressman Vince Fong



Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick, Washington AI Network's Tammy Haddad, and CNN's Sara Sidner



Vice Admiral Frank Whitworth, director of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency; the General Catalyst Institute's Teresa Carlson; and Jack Hiday, CEO of SandboxAQ

▼ Améthyste Celebration at La Résidence de France June 10



Yelberton "Yebbie" Watkins, chief of staff to Congressman James E. Clyburn, and Eric Feldman of General Motors



Event cohosts Steve Clemons of the National Interest and Widehall, Heather Podesta of Invariant, pollster and campaign strategist Kellyanne Conway, and Laurent Bili, French ambassador to the US



Congressman Jim Himes, Politico's Rachael Bade, Cynthia Vance of TTR Sotheby's International Realty, and Congressman Mike Turner

▼ Walmart Congressional Baseball Game Reception at Walmart's DC office
June 11



Actor Cole Hauser and Walmart's John Furner

Walmart's Wendy Hamilton, Bruce Harris, and Laura Siegrist

▼ Whiskey Charlie VIP Relaunch Party at Canopy by Hilton at the Wharf
June 12



Michael Anderson of Canopy by Hilton and Hyatt House Washington DC, Concord Hospitality's Zach Wendel and Angela Carrick, and Canopy by Hilton's Dagim Mekonnen

▼ Marcus DC VIP Grand Opening
June 23



House Oversight and Government Reform Committee chief counsel Wintta Woldemariam and political and communications strategist Erica Loewe

Marcus DC's Marcus Samuelsson, Rachel Sherriffe, and Anthony Jones

Musician Frédéric Yonnet and producer and publicist Carla Sims

▼ The Stacks Ribbon Cutting
June 18



Akridge's Adam Gooch (left) with Bridge Investment Group's Cameron Willis and Alex Jugant

▼ Karravaan Grand Opening
June 17



Dennis R. Bates Jr. and CNN's Eva McKend

Karravaan's Brian Swayze, Sanjay Mandhaiya, and Bobby Reilly

THINGS TO DO

Our 10 picks for the month in culture

By Pat Padua



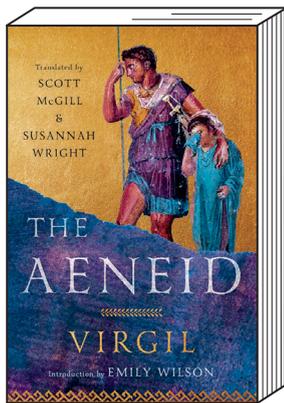
BOOKS

SCOTT MCGILL AND SUSANNAH WRIGHT

POLITICS AND PROSE
(UNION MARKET)

August 19

After the much-discussed recent translation of *The Iliad* by Emily Wilson, now there's a revitalization of another ancient epic, *The Aeneid*. This one is a collaborative effort from Rice University professors McGill and Wright; the introduction is, appropriately, by Wilson.



OPERA CARMEN

WOLF TRAP

August 15

Composer Georges Bizet never went to Spain, but his classic opera depicts for many the nation's definitive romantic soul, its very name able to send one into a humming, dancing reverie.



MUSIC THE WEEKND

NORTHWEST STADIUM

August 2

His recent film, *Hurry Up Tomorrow*, was a critical and commercial flop. Good thing he's still doing what he's good at: playing his big collection of winning hits in front of a huge crowd.



THEATER PARADE

KENNEDY CENTER

August 19–September 7

This Tony-winning musical is based on the true story of Leo and Lucille Frank, a Jewish couple who lived in the deep South more than a century ago. Their lives are upended when Leo is accused of a heinous crime.

PHOTOGRAPH OF THE WEEKEND BY NAOIMI RAHIM/GETTY IMAGES; PARADE BY JOAN MARCUS



MUSIC

DC JAZZ FESTIVAL

THE ANTHEM AND THE WHARF

August 27–31

Highlights at this annual celebration include big names (Ron Carter, right, Branford Marsalis) and homegrown talent (the String Queens, who all work in DC public schools). One not to miss: the Sun Ra Arkestra, led by 101-years-young Marshall Allen.



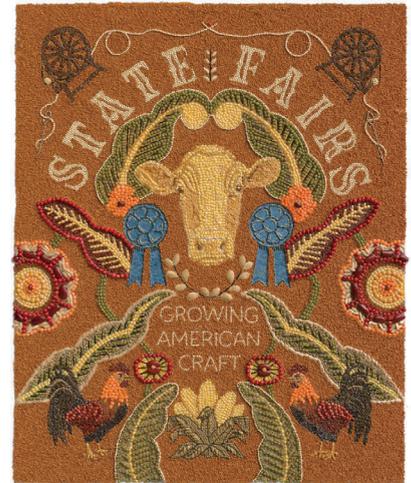
MUSEUMS

“STATE FAIRS: GROWING AMERICAN CRAFT”

RENWICK GALLERY

August 22, 2025–September 7, 2026

State fairs aren't just places for gross food and gigantic produce: This exhibit features more than 200 artworks created for fairs from the 19th century to the present. There will also be live demonstrations, including a life-size butter cow made onsite by the official butter sculptor of the Iowa State Fair.



MUSIC

UKEFEST

STRATHMORE

August 9–13

The ukulele isn't taken as seriously as the violin or guitar, but its tinkly timbre has helped earn the quirky stringed instrument major cult status. This annual gathering of the uke faithful features 17 hours of classes, a slew of jam sessions, and a faculty concert.



PANEL DISCUSSION

TWIN PEAKS: CONVERSATION WITH THE STARS

CAPITAL ONE HALL

August 4

Auteur David Lynch died in January, and you can celebrate his crowning television achievement by attending this conversation with some of the show's stars, including Sheryl Lee and Ray Wise (above).



MUSIC

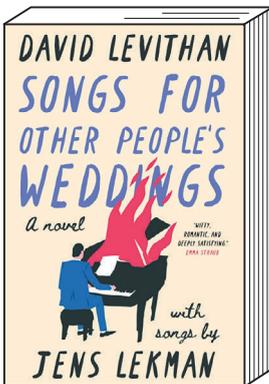
AFRO PLUS FEST



RFK FESTIVAL GROUNDS

August 31

Nigerian star Asake (above), who merges Afropop with hip-hop, is one of the international headliners at this festival dedicated to the various rhythms of the African diaspora, including highlife, fusion, and Caribbean sounds. Also on the bill: rapper Gunna, Trinidadian singer Machel Montano, and more. **W**



BOOKS

DAVID LEVITHAN AND JENS LEKMAN

POLITICS AND PROSE (CONNECTICUT AVENUE)

August 7

Author Levithan teamed up with Swedish singer-songwriter Lekman for a new novel, *Songs for Other People's Weddings*. One wrote the story (about a wedding singer who pens original songs for every couple that hires him); the other wrote and recorded 16 original tunes, which come with the book via a QR-code download.

PHOTOGRAPH OF CARTER BY MICHAEL LOCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES; TWIN PEAKS COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT; "STATE FAIRS" COURTESY OF LIZ SCHREIBER; UKEFEST BY JIM SAAH; ASAKE BY PASCAL LE SEGRETAIN/GETTY IMAGES



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IDEAS. ARGUMENTS. REPORTING.

Child Advocate

Conservative sociologist Brad Wilcox thinks Americans should have more kids. Is that good for women?

By Sylvie McNamara

IN 2023, THE US BIRTHRATE PLUNGED

to its lowest level in history, around 1.6 children per woman. Since then, it's barely recovered—and Brad Wilcox, a sociologist at the University of Virginia, is very concerned. Yes, a shrinking population can cause social and economic dysfunction, but to Wilcox, the bigger issue is cultural: He believes that rejecting the traditional family has made Americans sadder and more adrift. That's why, as director of the National Marriage Project and a fellow at the Institute for Family Studies, Wilcox has made it his life's work to evangelize the benefits of getting married and having kids.

Lately, many high-profile conservatives seem to agree. "I want a baby boom," Donald Trump told the crowd at CPAC in 2023. Elon Musk has called the collapse in birth rates "the biggest danger civilization faces by far," and JD Vance frequently frames childlessness as a scourge. Lately, the White House has floated various policy ideas to promote bigger families, such as cash bonuses for childbirth and medals for women with lots of kids. The father of nine and the author of a bluntly titled 2023 book, *Get Married*, Wilcox is conservative; he's advised JD Vance. But his policy ideas are heterodox and he's not always in step with the Trump administration. We called him to talk about what's going on with American families.

Why are Americans having fewer kids?

I think we face two different kinds of challenges, one economic and one cultural. Economically, the costs of child-rearing are higher than they were in a previous era. I'm thinking particularly of the cost of housing, especially in large metropolitan areas and their suburbs. Culturally, there's a kind of "Midas mindset" emerging among younger adults, this focus on work as the summit of our lives. There are Pew polls, for instance, showing that young adults see work as the primary path—or the better path—to living a fulfilling, happy life, more so than getting married and having a family. Then there's the impact of technology, the electronic opiates that degrade our capacities to socialize, date, marry, and have children.

What do you wish people understood about parenthood?

That kids engender life with an incredible sense of meaning and purpose and



FAMILY MAN: Brad Wilcox, who has nine kids, teaching at UVA.

direction. From the late 1960s into the present, we've had the left basically telling women that marriage and family are an obstacle to living a meaningful and happy life. And now we're getting that same message from the mansphere, on the online right, in the form of Andrew Tate telling young men that marriage and family life keep men from flourishing.

I just want people to understand that Americans who are married with kids are much less lonely and much more likely to report that their lives are meaningful. They're markedly happier than their peers who aren't married and don't have kids. There's a connection between family life and flourishing that I think is not sufficiently acknowledged in our public conversation around these issues.

You're conservative, but people might be surprised that you believe the state should have a role in family formation—by expanding the child tax credit, for instance.

There has been a shift in recent years where a lot of younger conservatives think that the Republican Party was not sufficiently attentive to the welfare of the family in previous decades. We've seen a decline in marriage and fertility, so the thought is that we've got to be more open to pursuing new ideas and policies that would make it easier for families to get married and have kids.

What do you think the mainstream left gets wrong about family policy?

I think that the main difference between right-leaning and left-leaning proponents of the family is their orientation to paid work. I like to distinguish between more

"workist" policies and more "familist" policies. Some policies are designed to make it easier for parents to work, or to spend more time at the workplace. So a national childcare policy—something Senator Elizabeth Warren has gotten behind—would be an example of that.

By contrast, I think family policy should be more familist—that is, it gives parents more resources to spend time with their kids, to choose to work part-time or to be at home with their young children. This is where, if we're going to have to choose between spending money on childcare [subsidies] and spending money on an expanded child tax credit, I would prefer to spend more money on the child tax credit, which gives parents the choice of how best to handle [raising their children].

The cost of childcare is a huge burden on American families. Wouldn't subsidizing it encourage more births?

In an international context, there's not very good evidence that childcare is making family formation easier and more attractive, or leading to a rebound in fertility. I mean, we're seeing declines in childbearing in countries like Canada and Finland, even though they have very generous policies around publicly provided childcare.

One reason might be that women pay substantial career penalties for parenthood, even when there's childcare available.

We do see that there is a motherhood penalty, in many contexts, that women pay in their careers. I think that's a real concern. At the same time, seeing kids as only a negative consequence for your financial bottom line is not the best way



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to look at having kids. In the United States today, there's no group of women who are living more meaningful and happy lives than married mothers. The benefits of having kids are often profound—socially and emotionally and existentially.

The data is clear that marriage is very good for men. It's less clear that it's good for women. What do you make of that?

There's certainly research that women benefit less in some domains from marriage than men do. We see, for instance, that women are better able to maintain ties with friends, family, and community institutions when they're single or divorced. But men are much more likely to see those ties become attenuated if they're not married. And yes, it's certainly the case that women are a bit less likely to be very happy in their marriages than men are, and the "happiness premium" is a bit smaller for married women than for married men. So it's certainly the case that women benefit less from marriage

than men do on important outcomes.

But we also have to keep in mind that women who are married—especially married mothers—are more likely to report that they're happy and that their lives are meaningful, compared to their peers who are single and childless. So even though women may not experience marriage and family life in quite the same beneficial ways that men do, they're still typically doing better than their female peers who are not married and don't have kids.

Women often carry a lot of the weight in a heterosexual marriage—they tend to do the bulk of housework and childcare, while also being in the workforce. Certainly, this benefits men. To women, I think it often feels burdensome and unfair.

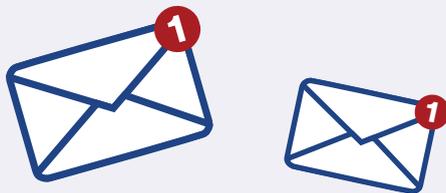
There are legitimate frustrations, but I think it's also important for couples to have a division of labor where you're doing roughly the same amount of work, but not necessarily the same kind of work. I'm not saying everyone has to have what

I would call a neo-traditional division of labor, but it's important not to think that every task in your home has to be divided 50-50. It's helpful to give the husband these tasks and the wife those tasks and not have as much contestation about trying to do things split down the middle.

You used the term "neo-traditional." I wanted to ask about the tradwife phenomenon.

There are plenty of young adults out there today who are reacting to a culture that they see as unmoored and that has given women and men a tremendous legacy of confusion and conflict. They would say, "Look, it's much easier to give clear and distinct roles to women and men that allow them to navigate marriage and family life without needless conflict and resentment." So I get that—I think there's certainly a place for a more traditional division of labor.

But the main challenge here is that some of the more traditionally minded influencers are embodying a model



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where the husband doesn't do much of anything on the home front. The neo-traditional model is one where the husband is deeply engaged in the life of his family. But being an engaged husband and father is incredibly generative for men. It gives them a sense of meaning and purpose and direction. And there's just no question that husbands who are more engaged with their kids have wives who are markedly happier. So I think the traditional family life expressed by influencers is deeply problematic if it's the kind where men are ruling as domestic kings in their homes without engaging practically in the lives of their kids.

I would love to do a lightning round on policies the administration has floated to increase birthrates, to see if you think they would be useful. First, JD Vance said parents should get to vote on behalf of their kids—basically, extra votes for parents.

Sure. We've got to figure out ways—culturally and politically and economically—to make family life more attractive in our society.

What about \$5,000 bonuses for giving birth?

I'd rather see a more generous child tax credit, more consistent support across the life course than just spending a big amount of money at birth.

Medals for women who give birth to six or more children?

Not a fan, nope. It just seems reminiscent of weird Soviet or German approaches to family life. We can come up with other ways to make families feel appreciated. Like, if families with young or school-aged kids could board first on airlines, that would be a cultural shift we could maybe get behind to make family life easier and make families feel appreciated.

You and your wife have nine kids. What made you choose that?

We're Catholic, and we wanted to have a nice Catholic family. But we actually thought we could not have [biological] children, and so my wife and I adopted five children. In 2009, we were very surprised to find out that my wife was pregnant with twins, and then we had two other kids after that.

What's been difficult about that and what's been rewarding?

When we had our twins, it was certainly a low point in my marriage. This was at a moment when the recession was kicking in, and I was worried about both the practical and the financial burdens of supporting and caring for a large family. Having a large family means that you're always putting out one fire or another, whether it's homework or a soccer tour-

nament or trying to navigate a Sunday youth group or a family gathering. There's just a lot of balls in the air that you've got to juggle. But at the same time, I can't really convey the ways in which having a large family gives your life more joy and meaning. **W**

Staff writer Sylvie McNamara is at smcnamara@washingtonian.com. This interview has been edited and condensed.

NATIONAL BUILDING MUSEUM

Gala

HONORING Gensler



Congratulations to Gensler

On Wednesday, June 11, the National Building Museum recognized Gensler as the recipient of the 2025 Honor Award for its profound and visionary contributions to the built environment.





BOUND FOR SUCCESS: Ellie Maranda, who runs Opus, is helping writers get their work out there.

Prose, Not Pros

Opus, a booming self-publishing operation at Politics and Prose, is so popular that authors wait months for a slot

By Ike Allen

ARCH CAMPBELL AND PAT COLLINS ARE two of DC's more prominent retired TV news figures, and though they were colleagues at NBC4, these days they're embroiled in a (friendly) literary rivalry: They're competing to see who can sell more copies of his memoir at Politics and Prose. "I've been friends with him for decades, so we're always needling each other," Campbell says. "We have been trading sales figures, and I'm encroaching, right behind him. If he turns around, he'll see me carting a box of books to some event so I can sell them out of my trunk."

The minor twist here is that neither Campbell nor Collins actually has a book deal: Politics and Prose isn't just selling the memoirs, it's printing them. The longtime independent bookseller on Connecticut Avenue runs an in-house publishing operation, called Opus, that allows authors to self-publish their work. This side business has by some metrics been a huge success. Lately, there's been a waitlist of nearly a year for Opus's services. Apparently—perhaps

unsurprisingly—a whole lot of amateur authors live in upper Northwest DC.

So far, Collins is at the top of that pile, sales-wise. The recently retired TV personality, famed for his "snow stick," is Opus's bestselling author, with more than 1,300 copies of his book, *Newsmen*, sold so far. That isn't a big number by Penguin Random House standards, but Collins gets to keep a lot more of the money. The book—which Opus's designer decorated with Collins's old press credentials—details some of his scoops, from the unsolved murders he can't shake to the much-memed segment in which he wore a grape costume.

Opus tends to attract accomplished, retired locals with long memoir manuscripts and little interest from—or connections to—the traditional publishing world. But it has also published photography monographs, historical novels, cookbooks, and other types of work. "They're passion projects," says Ellie Maranda, who runs the publishing operation. "Nobody that comes to Opus is an author by profession."

And yet Opus isn't an ordinary self-publishing business, primarily because it's associated with Washington's most prominent indie bookstore. Opus offerings line a well-positioned display case near the front window, each with a bar code, blurbs, and a smartly designed cover. (Politics and Prose keeps a small portion of revenue from these sales.) Authors pay for that positioning, as well as for having the book designed, printed, and sold in the store for a year. The cost of the mid-tier package recently went up from \$599 to \$1,000, which includes books with an ISBN, the industry number that allows them to be sold in stores. A \$1,200 "presidential" package includes marketing fliers, an invitation to speak at an author event, and recommendation slips that help sell the books to browsers.

Self-publishers don't tend to have a stellar reputation. Historically, so-called vanity presses have been a last resort for writers who couldn't interest a "real" publisher in their work. That has changed in recent years, with a whole industry of independent writers now selling books directly to readers—and pocketing all the revenue instead of a small fraction. But many readers remain dismissive of self-published books, because mainstream publishing houses don't seem to deem them worthy of notice and—often—no professional editors have tempered or trimmed them.

On the other hand, the internet has led

to an explosion of self-publishing, and book-length works released through services like Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing can often find large and enthusiastic audiences. The number of author-published titles with ISBNs is on the rise, having more than doubled in the past decade at the same time as the number of traditional titles published each year has fallen. Publishing houses have signed huge deals with genre authors whose work was originally self-released, like superstar novelist Colleen Hoover.

Much of Opus's output bears the hallmarks of self-published work, such as indulgent page counts and occasionally odd turns of phrase. But the eclectic Opus roster can also often be genuinely interesting, as with an anthology of DC women writers edited by American University literature professor Melissa Scholes Young or a memoir by former Louisville mayor Harvey Sloane. And many of these authors simply want to hold the book in their hands, send copies to friends and family, maybe sell a few books to neighbors and readers who might happen to find the topic of interest. "It's a lot of really personal things," Maranda says. "Sometimes it's just a way of passing down stories—almost like a family heirloom."

OPUS IS RUN FROM A SINGLE DESK tucked into a nook off of the fiction room of Politics and Prose's flagship Connecticut Avenue store. You can usually find Maranda

there, busy working on one of the 40 or so books the publisher will put out by the end of the year. A Midwesterner who graduated from the University of Iowa last year, Maranda is relatively new to the job, but she has quickly adjusted to her authors' needs. "The clientele is a lot of older people," she says, "and they like that I help them every step of the way." She doesn't do any revising of the text; writers have to hire their own editors if that's a service they want. But she does format the pages, lay out photos, and design covers. The finished books don't look exactly like the product of a major publisher, but they're pretty close. Customers might not even realize what they're buying.

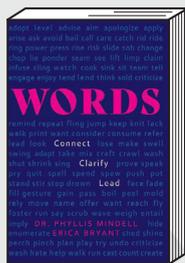
That wouldn't have been the case back in 2011, when Politics and Prose began its experiment with self-publishing. At the time, Bradley Graham and Lissa Muscatine had recently bought the store, and they learned about something called an Espresso machine. "It had nothing to do with coffee," Graham says. "It was a machine that printed books."

On Demand Books, the inventor of the Espresso Book Machine, had plans to lease them out to bookstores and libraries across the country. Customers would be able to have books manufactured right in front of them. Politics and Prose was one of the few places that went for the idea, and soon it was using one of the machines for a new self-publishing operation that it called Opus.

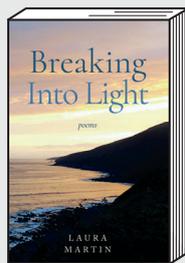
The Top Five Bestselling Books From Opus Self-Publishing



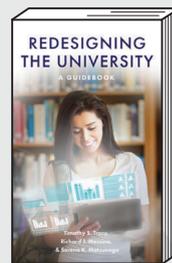
Newsman
by Pat Collins
A beloved local TV reporter writes about his career, from unsolved murders to measuring winter weather with a "snow stick."



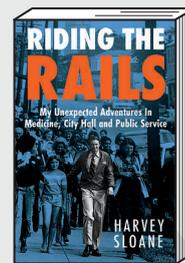
Words: Connect, Clarify, and Lead
by Phyllis Mindell
The late self-help author, who also wrote *How to Say It, for Women*, penned this guide to effective communication.



Breaking Into Light
by Laura Martin
A volume of poetry intended as a balm for different kinds of loss.



Redesigning the University
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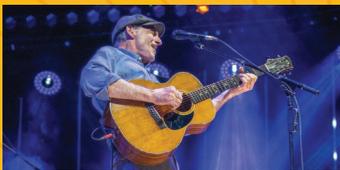
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Not every writer craves stardom, and not every book has to be a blockbuster. Sometimes it's enough just to have the work finished and printed.

The Espresso looked like a big office copier attached to a transparent washing machine; you could watch it crank out a bound copy of a book in less than seven minutes.

It turned out that the Espresso broke down often, emitted a strange inky smell, and didn't earn nearly as much as it cost to lease. When their five-year agreement with On Demand Books ended, Graham and Muscatine opted not to renew it. (Last year, the company went out of business.)

But the Opus concept stuck. With conventional publishers consolidating and downsizing, Graham and Muscatine believed there was space in the market—and the store—for authors who might previously have gotten book deals but were struggling to get their work out there. They contracted with a company to handle the printing; cover design and marketing were handled in-house.

Opus has now released almost 400 titles, with many more on the way. The operation still isn't profitable, but Graham says it loses less money than the Espresso did. What Opus does provide is community-building—another way to connect with the store's book-loving neighbors. In a way, it's not dissimilar to the store's popular basement cafe, or even its author readings, which move units but also provide a gathering place for literary locals. "We have always believed that we exist not just to sell stuff," Graham says. "I think people choose Opus for the same reasons that they shop at independent bookstores rather than going online to buy books. They get that personalized attention."

FOR SOME OF THE WRITERS WHO HAVE gone the Opus route, the Politics and Prose

name does lend a kind of prestige. “It’s such a valued place for me and my friends and my community, and I love walking into the store and seeing my book on the shelf,” says Jill Morningstar, the author of *Eva Schmidt*, a novel about a Jewish orphan who becomes a fortuneteller to the wife of Joseph Goebbels.

Morningstar spent her career working on Capitol Hill and at nonprofits like the Children’s Defense Fund. “At some point, I hit a wall and decided I wanted to do something more left-brained,” she says. “With no skills in the visual arts and no theater group willing to take me on, I decided to write a book.” The novel, which Morningstar researched extensively, took a decade to write. But the traditional publishing route didn’t work out. “Publishing houses don’t do much for you anyway unless you’re really at the top of the list of bestsellers. You’re still flying around the country trying to market and sell your book. You still do most of the effort.”

Michael Sodaro, a longtime political-science professor at George Washington University, did have experience with regular publishers, having previously sold books to Cornell University Press and McGraw Hill. But he couldn’t find any takers for *Island of Myths*, a 600-page historical novel about a Sicilian family that he began writing in 2007. “I don’t know anybody in literary publishing in New York,” Sodaro says. “I didn’t [write it] with the intention of starting a new career as a novelist. This was an obsession, in a way. I enjoyed every minute of it.” *Island of Myths* was published in 2021, and it scored a coveted review from the industry publication *Kirkus*, which called it “a mesmerizing novel as historically astute as it is gripping.”

Yet even with that bit of national attention, Sodaro’s book has sold only a handful of copies. No Opus author is getting rich from sales. Even Pat Collins, its biggest success story, says his income from *Newsman* has been just about enough for him to break even. But not every writer craves stardom, and not every book has to be a blockbuster. Sometimes it’s enough just to have the work finished and printed. “You don’t write these things to put yourself on easy street,” Collins says. “It’s more like a personal therapeutic exercise you go through. It’s good for the soul.” **W**

Staff writer Ike Allen can be reached at ikallen@washingtsonian.com.



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What happens after we die?

When our bodies perish,
can our consciousness persist?

WHAT LIES BEYOND

At the University of Virginia,
researchers are searching for answers,
one near-death experience at a time.

By Joan Niesen

A

t the eastern edge of downtown Charlottesville—past the red-brick pedestrian mall with its bookstores and fudge shops and busking guitarists, beyond the incongruously modern amphitheater, just as the road begins to slope downhill toward the train tracks and then out toward Monticello—sits an utterly nondescript condo building.

I was there looking for the site of some highly unusual research conducted within the University of Virginia's medical school. It's mind-bending, norm-challenging work that explores the metaphysical—which is why I'd expected something a little more mystical. A spiral staircase, an owl, a crystal ball. The divination tower at Hogwarts. Certainly not a mid-rise straight out of Anywhere, USA. Only there it was, visible through the glass front door: a placard in the lobby reading DIVISION OF PERCEPTUAL STUDIES.

The door handle turned with a wiggle. Upstairs were the researchers I'd come to see, inside an office lined with heaving bookshelves, at wide wooden desks scattered with papers and research journals. They've devoted their careers to one of life's biggest questions: What happens when we die?

The short answer: No one really knows. But the scientists at the Division of Perceptual Studies—DOPS, for short—are doing their best to find out. Founded in 1967, the 14-person group investigates the relationship between life and death, mind and brain, and the tantalizing, albeit woo-woo, possibility that when our physical bodies perish, our consciousness persists.

The only major research unit in the country, and one of a few in the world, specifically devoted to studying the paranormal—or “psi,” in industry-speak—DOPS is not standard academia. A workday for one of the researchers might entail speaking with a child who recalls a past life or fielding an email from someone who's had a premonition about a looming disaster. Sometimes, it involves walking downstairs to the Faraday cage, a room lined with metal sheeting where researchers conduct experiments related to telepathy and altered states and consciousness. (The cage's purpose is twofold: It blocks electromagnetic interference so researchers can measure electrical activity in subjects' brains, and it ensures that subjects can't cheat, faking telepathy by using wireless communications devices.)

When Marieta Pehlivanova, a psychologist at DOPS, tells parents at her young child's school about her job, they often pause for a beat and share the same assessment: *Interesting*. “But I don't think they mean ‘interesting’ in the usual definition,” Pehlivanova explains. They mean: *Hmm, that sounds strange*.

Alongside Bruce Greyson, a psychiatrist, Pehlivanova spends much of her time studying near-death experiences. Also known as NDEs, they are relatively self-explanatory, occurring as physical death approaches—when a car strikes a pedestrian or a swimmer is caught in a rip tide, when a clogged artery restricts blood flow to the heart. Survivors often recall similar sensations: brilliant light, a feeling of harmony with the universe, a sense of separation from the body, the presence of mystical beings.

Probing these experiences strains the traditional scientific method. Researchers can't hook a patient up to a set of electrodes,

ask him to almost die, then see if his brain waves had any interesting fluctuations. Instead, Greyson and Pehlivanova rely on recollections. They conduct interview after interview and receive more emails than they can reasonably reply to, all from people bursting with thoughts and questions about their own NDEs.

Much of that collected testimony is typed up and stored in metal file cabinets. The whole scene is more Dunder Mifflin than Harry Potter. But contained in this data, these years of anecdotes, is the heart of the mystery Pehlivanova and Greyson hope to solve. Their job is to look for patterns, publish academic papers, and push for acceptance and respect within the scientific community, where it's more acceptable to pose questions about cures for cancer than it is to tell the story of a patient who insists she spoke to a celestial being while her body was flatlining on an operating table. NDEs may strain scientific understanding—but that's exactly why DOPS researchers believe they're worth serious study. “Scientists don't run away from things we don't understand,” Greyson says. “We run towards them, try to understand them.”

IN 1989, JOAN FOWLER WAS CYCLING ON THE PACIFIC COAST Highway when she was hit by a truck. The next thing she knew, she says, her consciousness was floating above the scene.

“I could see my bike sort of halfway under the truck and my body to the side . . . and I thought, wow, that's so fascinating,” recalls Fowler, a reconnective healer who lives in Silver Spring. “And in that moment, while I was watching, I could feel this pull to my right side. And as I allowed my attention to go towards that pull, I could see this beautiful white light. I could feel this warmth and love, and I could feel my physical boundaries just disappear. I became really expansive.”

Fowler's experience was uncommon, but not as rare as you might imagine. Researchers estimate that some 5 percent of American adults will report having an

NDE over the course of their lives; among cardiac patients, that number can jump to about 20 percent. And the phenomenon has a long history. During the first century, Pliny the Elder wrote about a man who'd experienced something that sounds a lot like an NDE. Carl Jung reported having one during a 1944 heart attack, later describing how he'd left his body and observed the world from above. And years after a 1961 NDE during a bout with pneumonia, Elizabeth Taylor told Oprah Winfrey all about it, including a conversation with her deceased husband.

In 1975, Raymond Moody popularized the term “near-death experience” in his book *Life After Life*, a qualitative survey of 150 people who'd reported NDEs. Initially released by a tiny publishing house in St. Simons Island, Georgia, the book eventually sold more than 13 million copies after a major firm acquired the rights.

Soon after the book was published, Moody began his psychiatry residency at UVA, where Greyson had just finished training. Greyson remained on staff, and he happened to serve as Moody's supervisor in the emergency room. When he learned about the younger doctor's research, Greyson felt a tug of familiarity. Over the course of his own residency, Greyson says, he'd encountered patients who reported “these unbelievable stories about leaving their bodies and seeing things going on around them, meeting deceased loved ones

Near-death experiences may strain scientific understanding—but that's exactly why Greyson and Pehlivanova believe they're worth serious study: “Scientists don't run away from things we don't understand.”



*DOPS psychologist
Marieta Pehlivanova
and psychiatrist
Bruce Greyson*



and so forth. I assumed they were mentally ill.”

The more Greyson learned about Moody’s work, the more intrigued he became. One day, Moody brought Greyson a massive box of correspondence from people who had read or heard about *Life After Life*. “‘This is this week’s letters,’” Greyson recalls Moody telling him. “Every one was from someone who said, ‘You mean I’m not the only one this happened to?’ They had [NDEs] a year ago, ten years ago, 30 years ago, and thought they were the only [person] that it’s ever happened to. They were afraid to tell anyone about it.”

Greyson reached out to DOPS founder Ian Stevenson, who had stepped down as the chairman of UVA’s psychiatry department to study parapsychology—that is, psychic and paranormal phenomena, including his passion, reincarnation. Greyson was curious: Had Stevenson ever looked into near-death experiences? His answer: Sort of. In less than a decade of work, Stevenson had collected dozens of accounts, filed as “deathbed visions” and “apparitions,” which sounded a lot like NDEs.

Greyson and Moody began to add to Stevenson’s collection, hoping to come to some understanding of what, physically, was happening in patients’ brains. “I was still in the materialistic mindset that I was trained in as a college student and then a medical student: The mind is what the brain does, and that’s it,” Greyson says. “I couldn’t make any sense of it.”

Though Greyson collaborated with Stevenson, he wasn’t of-

ficially on staff at DOPS, which in those early days operated almost completely out of the public eye. Bankrolled by a \$1 million gift from the inventor of the technology behind Xerox machines, the unit evoked curiosity—and skepticism. University leadership hasn’t always been “favorably disposed” to the research, Greyson says, and in those early days he kept one foot firmly planted in the world of traditional medicine.

Near-death researchers can’t hook patients up to electrodes, ask them to almost die, then see if their brain waves had any interesting fluctuations. Instead, they rely on recollections, interviews that are typed up and stored.

Pursuing a somewhat conventional path as an academic physician, Greyson left UVA for the University of Michigan and then the University of Connecticut. But in his free time, he kept researching NDEs—even after bigwigs at Michigan told him it would torpedo his future. “Most doctors had no idea what we were talking about,” he says of his work in the ’70s and ’80s. “They thought we were being too gullible. We would present at the American Medical Association conferences and there’d be very polite attention from the audience, but nobody would really say anything.”

Greyson was undeterred, even as parapsychology remained the black sheep of the scientific world. In 1985, the United States National Research Council commissioned a panel that studied paranormal claims, finding that “despite a 130-year record of scientific research . . . [there was] no scientific justification for the existence of phenomena such as extrasensory perception, mental telepathy or ‘mind over matter’ exercises.” Seven years after the panel’s 1988 report, Greyson returned to

Charlottesville and joined DOPS. He took over for Stevenson in 2002 and retired in 2014, but he continues to research and write. Today, he's the face of his field: With his crisp button-down, gray-checked suit and slightly ruffled silver hair, he looks the professorial part. Four years ago, he wrote a book about his research, *After*, that has sold more than 100,000 copies. Last spring, he was a guest on Oprah's podcast.

That the public is interested isn't surprising; a 2023 Pew poll found that 83 percent of Americans believe people have souls or spirits in addition to their physical bodies, and 74 percent believe science doesn't have an explanation for everything. But skepticism within academia persists. In 2007, Princeton University's Engineering Anomalies Research Laboratory, which studied telekinesis, closed. DOPS, meanwhile, continues to run entirely on private funding, including donations from the actor John Cleese, and relies heavily on volunteers to support researchers with everything from data analysis to Instagram posts.

For a researcher aspiring to study phenomena like NDEs, the path is anything but straightforward. Pehlivanova, the heir to Greyson's research, is nearly four decades younger, which means that she grew up with a vocabulary for discussing things like NDEs. She has a long-held interest in psychic phenomena, but while pursuing her psychology doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania, she kept that quiet. "It was . . . the kind of academic environment where not even spirituality was something that people talked about, or religion—certainly not psi," she says.

But then Pehlivanova learned there might be a job opportunity at DOPS. She mentioned the possibility to her adviser, who "pulled up the website, scrolled through it, did not say a single thing, closed it," says Pehlivanova, who made a silent vow: *I'm never mentioning this ever again*. Still, her interest persisted. When the position was funded, it was Pehlivanova's if she wanted it. She didn't think twice about accepting.

TWO YEARS AGO, PEHLIVANOVA RECEIVED AN EMAIL FROM Tara White, a chiropractor in Santa Fe. While kayaking on the Rio Chama in New Mexico, White had been swept by wild rapids into a large boulder.

Next, as she later wrote to Pehlivanova, "I saw myself on the rock watching as my body drowned in the rapids below the rock. I watched as my body floated down the river, hitting different rocks, getting beat up." All the while, White felt warm and content, surrounded by three "beings of light." She was happy to remain wherever she was "forever. . . . It was so quiet, lovely, and calm."

But that sensation quickly shifted. White saw police arriving at her house, telling her husband and two children that she'd died on the river. Her sense of calm evaporated. "They cannot have a mother who dies early," she recalls thinking. "And so the moment that I did that . . . it's like I was slammed back into my body. And it was cold. And I was underneath the water."

To evaluate and compare NDEs, Greyson created a scale, a series of 16 questions that get at the commonalities among many NDEs. *Did time seem to speed up or slow down? Did scenes from the*

future come to you? Did you see deceased or religious spirits? Were your senses more vivid than usual? Each response can earn up to two points, and anyone who scores higher than a seven is considered to have had an NDE, with higher scores corresponding to more intense, profound experiences—in DOPS-speak, "deep NDEs."

Beyond those commonalities, the specifics vary from person to person. One subject told Greyson he'd experienced elements of heaven and hell and that Jesus had ultimately sent him back. An-

other said he'd had an out-of-body experience while under anesthesia and noticed that a nurse in the operating room wore mismatched shoelaces. People report seeing vivid scenes from their childhood, meeting deities, smelling strong scents. NDEs also seem to vary based on gender, religion, and cultural background. For example, people in the Western world tend to describe being at the end of a long tunnel, whereas people in less developed nations say they were at the bottom of a well. Once, a trucker told Greyson he'd been sucked into a long tailpipe.

That said, some people also report experiences that conflict with their cultural

and religious expectations of death. For example, a Christian might describe a scene more in line with Buddhist teachings. In a 2013 paper, Greyson used that phenomenon to upend the critique that NDEs might be a result of imagination, of subconscious suggestion. *I've read about near-death experiences, and they usually involve lights and tunnels. Or: My religion believes in heaven, so when I worried I was about to die, I saw angels.* Also, Greyson wrote, "experiences that were reported before 1975, when Moody's first book coined the term NDE and made it a well-known phenomenon, do not differ from those that were reported since that date."

So what, exactly, causes NDEs? Greyson and Pehlivanova can't say for certain. Some scientists believe there's a physical explanation, some mechanism rooted in the brain or body that places them in the same category as hallucinations. If that's the case, then NDEs could be written off as a quirk of biochemistry—and not a possible window into consciousness existing after death.

Greyson and Pehlivanova have looked at more than a dozen such theories. All, they say, have been disproven, and they illustrate how difficult NDEs are to study. For example: Anyone who comes close to death receives insufficient oxygen for a period of time. Could that trigger hallucinations? Greyson looked at data from hospitalized cardiac-arrest patients and found that those who reported NDEs had greater oxygen levels than those who didn't. Similarly, researchers have found that hospital patients taking higher doses of drugs report fewer NDEs than those taking lower doses.

Another theory posits that sudden bursts of electrical activity in the brain prior to death might be responsible for NDEs. However, experiments that involve humans almost dying are a nonstarter, so much of the existing research in this realm has involved studying rats. "No one interviews the rats to see what they were thinking," Greyson says.

University of Kentucky neurologist Kevin Nelson became fascinated with NDEs early in his career, when a patient described watching a battle for his soul between Jesus and the devil. In 2006, he coauthored a paper that introduced another possible physical explanation for NDEs: REM intrusion, a state in which the brain blends wakefulness with sleep. Nelson and Greyson have

A 2023 Pew poll found that 83 percent of Americans believe people have souls or spirits in addition to their physical bodies, while 74 percent believe there are some things science can't possibly explain.

since sparred over the REM-intrusion theory—respectfully and academically—and Nelson can't get onboard with the belief that consciousness exists beyond the human brain. "We don't have certainly a shred of even the most ordinary scientific evidence for this extraordinary claim," he says.

Despite their differences, the two doctors agree on one thing: For those who survive them, NDEs can have a profound psychological impact. As Pehlivanova puts it, "This changes people."

AT FIRST, WHITE'S EXPERIENCE ON THE RIO CHAMA LEFT her rattled. But over time, it made her question how she approached life. A high achiever, she'd been the valedictorian of her high-school class, gotten a full ride to college, and built a chiropractic practice on her own.

In the wake of her NDE, White felt like none of that mattered. She shut down her practice to spend more time with her kids. "I was having a real challenge being back in my life," she says. "I felt like I had just stepped off the mental deep end, like I was floating, like I couldn't be really grounded in 3D life."

Greyson has spoken with many people whose NDEs were transformative. There's the manual laborer who lost his violent streak. The TV producer who suddenly felt her job was devoid of meaning. The teenage boy who found a calling as an EMT. "They almost always come back saying, 'I am much more spiritual now than I was before,'" Greyson says. "People will feel connected to everything around them, like they're part of something greater than themselves. They also report that they are no longer afraid of dying. Even those who have unpleasant experiences say, 'I know this is not the end, and I'm looking forward to whatever comes next.'"

In the early 1980s, Greyson worked with many suicidal patients who had stopped short of ending their lives because they feared what would happen afterward. He worried that NDEs would make these patients more likely to follow through with suicide—but found the opposite. "They said things like, 'Now I realize I'm greater than just this bag of skin, and the problems that I have are no longer as important as they were,'" Greyson says.

In addition to altering worldviews, NDEs can leave survivors feeling perplexed—and alone. Following her cycling accident, Fowler, the reconnective healer from Silver Spring, didn't know what to make of her NDE, or whom to confide in. When she left the hospital, she told her family about it. They wondered if she had sustained a brain injury. Fowler was then called up for duty during Operation Desert Storm. "I definitely couldn't talk about it in the context of the military," she says. "They have a straitjacket for that."

Historically, near-death experiencers report "a lot of bad reactions, like being told they're crazy, being told to shut up" when they share what they've gone through, Pehlivanova says. Some have been given drugs and put in psychiatric wards, suffering ongoing mental-health issues.

White reached out to Pehlivanova and DOPS because she felt psychologically stuck. "Regular therapy," she says, "was not getting it done for me." Learning that what she went through had a name—and that others had gone through similar experiences

and changes—helped her become more comfortable with the life choices she had made since her accident.

"That there is anybody studying it at all immediately gave me validity," White says. "I was like, 'Oh, wait a minute, this is really a thing. I don't have to be so hard on myself.'"

Greyson and Pehlivanova like to imagine a world in which people like White and Fowler feel comfortable confiding in their doctors—and the psychological impacts of NDEs are taken seriously in post-trauma medical care. To make that happen, DOPS is working to build relationships with UVA's physicians and to give them tools to discuss NDEs. Recently, the unit sent a questionnaire to more than 200 doctors at the school. "Almost all of them knew at least something about near-death experiences," Greyson says. "Most of them thought they should talk to patients about it. Most of them thought they didn't know enough to do so."

"You really need to be open to hearing what the patients want to say about it—not telling the patient what happened to them," he adds. "If they want to think that it's a lack of oxygen, or a gift from God, or psychological fear of death, let them come to their own conclusions. But listen to what they say about it, and how they think it's going to affect their future life."

People who have near-death experiences often "report that they are no longer afraid of dying. Even those who have unpleasant experiences say, 'I know this is not the end, and I'm looking forward to whatever comes next.'"

YEARS AGO, ONE OF GREYSON'S INTERVIEW subjects shared an odd detail: While floating above his own body during surgery, he could see his surgeon make a flapping motion with his arms.

Puzzled, Greyson sought out the surgeon, who immediately understood the movement he'd described. After he scrubbed in and put on sterile gloves, the surgeon explained, he didn't want to risk touching anything that might have been a contaminant. So he placed his hands on his chest and directed his team by pointing his elbows at various items in the room.

The practice of fact-checking accounts is common at DOPS, not out of skepticism

but as a means of validation. The arm-flapping surgeon is at the core of what the unit wants others to recognize: experiences that defy understanding. The "reductionist physiological theories that claim to explain NDEs by explaining—claiming to explain—one aspect of them," Pehlivanova says, have little mechanism to account for how an anesthetized patient could have observed his doctor waving his elbows here and there as the operation got underway.

What happens when we die? Are we more than our bodies? Nelson, the University of Kentucky researcher, mirrors the medical and scientific consensus when he says that "consciousness is brain-dependent, and I hold to that until proven otherwise." (Nelson also hopes he's wrong.) Greyson started in the same place—believing that the mind is nothing more than the physical brain—but has since moved away from such certainty. There are too many inexplicable stories filed away, too many experiences that suggest something more. "It'll probably take us another 100 years or more to find out what's really going on," he says. "I won't be around to hear that, but I think we are getting there." **W**

Joan Niesen is a freelance writer and author of the newsletter "Grazing." She profiled former Alaska representative Mary Peltola in the November 2024 issue.



The Faraday cage, a metal-lined room where researchers talk to subjects free from electromagnetic interference



2025 RESIDENTIAL DESIGN AWARDS

In search of inspiration?
Check out these projects
honored by the DC chapter
of the American Institute
of Architects.

BY ERIC WILLS

Slayton House, one of the only residences
designed by acclaimed architect I.M. Pei,
shines anew after a restoration.



Preserving Pei

**ROBERT M. GURNEY
ARCHITECT**

I.M. PEI, the architect responsible for the East Building of the National Gallery of Art, designed only three residences during his distinguished career. Slayton House in Cleveland Park, completed in 1960, is one of them. DC architect Robert Gurney restored the structure—updating the roof, insulation, plumbing, and electrical. Gurney also designed a two-story addition with a garage and an office wrapped in perforated metal screens; moved and expanded the kitchen; and added a guest bedroom and media room under the dining room and deck. “The new structure disappears, particularly at night,” the jury raved. The project “honors the original house.”



PREVIOUS SPREAD AND THIS PAGE, PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANICE HOACHLANDER



DC Modern

WOUTER BOER ARCHITECTS

DURING THE PANDEMIC, when a young family in Northwest was looking for more space, they hired DC’s Wouter Boer Architects to design a home. The firm conceived of the entire lot as the house, ringing the property with an evergreen hedge and creating a steel-framed structure with floor-to-ceiling glass panels. Informed by the dictum that form follows function, the project blurs the boundaries between inside and out: “The outdoor spaces just become big outdoor rooms,” says Boer. The goal was “a house that isn’t fashionable” but timeless. Said the jury: “Restraint and simplicity are very hard to commit to. The details are very careful, very clear, very well done.”

TOP PHOTOGRAPH BY AARON ADAMS; BOTTOM BY ALLEN RUSS PHOTOGRAPHY

Affordability Reimagined

CUNNINGHAM QUILL ARCHITECTS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING can be well designed and dignified. That’s the message sent by Terraces East, built in Arlington and cited by the judges in the multifamily category. The project houses 77 affordable units, enables aging in place, includes a courtyard and other community gathering spaces, and offers views of the Army Navy Country Club next door. “Really good scale and proportion,” the judges said. For a project built with tax credits, “it’s really hard to do this quality of work.”





Hill History Transformed

COLLEEN HEALEY ARCHITECTURE

FOR THIS RESTORATION/RENOVATION of a 1910 brick rowhouse on Capitol Hill, originally designed by architect Clement Didden for a brewing magnate, DC architect Colleen Healey seamlessly merged old and new. She expanded the kitchen, adding a pantry and powder room, and built a new island to match the existing hutch; exposed the original trusses in the primary bedroom; crafted railings out of reclaimed joists and iron hangers; removed a redundant staircase to create a lightwell; and designed a wet room. The result is a marvelous interplay between the rustic and the refined, between the historic bones of the house and the contemporary additions. The judges called it a “beautiful homage” that was “very restrained” and “tastefully done.”





Towering Change

COOKFOX ARCHITECTS

NATIONAL LANDING, home to Amazon, has been a neighborhood in transition. (See our guide on page 157.) Just look at the Reva, a 27-story residential tower, completed last year, that the judges honored in the multifamily category. Taking the place of a hulking concrete building previously on the site, the Reva represents a “more friendly and approachable” style of modernism, says Susie Teal, a partner with New York’s CookFox Architects. Apart from its curved forms—the jury lauded the design of the glazed terra-cotta facade—the LEED Silver-certified project helps revive the Arlington neighborhood’s street life. “There’s just so much more energy now along Crystal Drive than there was,” says Teal.



A Goodman, Reborn

COOK ARCHITECTURE

MICHAEL COOK, the principal of Cook Architecture in Falls Church, has dedicated himself to preserving the midcentury houses that architect Charles Goodman designed in the Washington area. For this project, which the jury awarded with a “Design for Economy” citation, he restored and renovated a 1951 Goodman in Silver Spring’s Hammond Wood neighborhood: rebuilding the windows, restoring the original brickwork, reconfiguring the entrance, and adding contemporary finishes. Why tear down when you can revive a light-dappled slice of history? “I want to offer a clear alternative to contractor-driven design/build projects that are often out of scale and ruin the fabric” of a neighborhood, Cook says. The jury noted: “To give an existing structure new life is the most sustainable thing we can do.”



PHOTOGRAPH OF REVA BY SAM KITTNER & JBG SMITH; OTHERS BY JOHN COLE PHOTOGRAPHY







CRAIG HOLMAN'S

For more than two decades, the good-government advocate has waged a Sisyphean campaign against corruption, conflicts of interest, and the power of big money and special interests in Washington politics. These days, his work feels especially urgent.

UPHILL BATTLE

By David Levinthal

Photograph by Greg Kahn

When Craig Holman first came to, he found himself in George Washington University Hospital hooked up to machines.

His ribs, hip, and knee were shattered. His ankle, too. He had suffered a brain bleed.

The victim of an early-March car crash—another driver struck Holman’s 2002 stick-shift Saturn after running a red light on Pennsylvania Avenue—Holman would spend a week in intensive care and three more in various hospital wards. Surgeries would follow surgeries. Much of the time, he couldn’t leave his bed without assistance.

And still he couldn’t stop thinking about Donald Trump.

For hours and hours, Holman would fixate on the newscasts emanating from the TV above his bed. Body broken, his mind seethed at what he saw as gross abuses of power by the President: firing thousands of federal workers, issuing massive tariffs, targeting law firms perceived to have worked against his political or personal interests, letting his Department of Government Efficiency run amok. Holman wasn’t happy with Congress, either, which he viewed as feckless, a legislature surrendering its constitutional clout to an overstepping executive.

“You’re sitting there, watching Trump on the news doing some obvious violation of the law, and you’re thinking, ‘I’d be filing a complaint right now if I were home!’ ” Holman says.

Of that, there’s little doubt. The 69-year-old Holman is a leading member of a peculiar Washington tribe: advocates for good government. Also known as “goo-goos,” they fight to regulate lobbying, limit the influence of money in politics, keep elected officials honest, and otherwise “drain the swamp” in the pre-Trumpian sense of the phrase.

For 23 years, Holman has been on the frontlines working as the government-affairs lobbyist for Public Citizen, the progressive nonprofit founded a half century ago by consumer advocate Ralph Nader. In the best of times, the job can feel thankless, even Sisyphean. Outnumbered and outspent, goo-goos perpetually push the rock of reform up Capitol Hill, only to be pulled back down by the stubborn gravity of wealth and self-interest.

And these are not the best of times. Between an ongoing explosion of political spending and Trump’s return to the White House, goo-goos are on their back foot, confronting a new crisis almost daily. To wit: As emergency workers rescued Holman by cutting through both his car and his beloved leather jacket, the President signed an executive order establishing a government Strategic Bitcoin Reserve, never mind that Trump is heavily invested in the World Liberty Financial crypto-trading platform and launched an eponymous cryptocurrency—\$TRUMP coin—days before his inauguration.

“This is a classic scandal,” Holman says. “It shows the power of money over our White House and over our President, which is interesting because Trump used to claim that he was so wealthy he couldn’t be bought. Now he can be bought by a meme.” (Declining to answer specific questions about Holman’s criticisms of Trump, a White House spokesperson told *Washingtonian* that “President Trump’s assets are in a trust managed by his children. There are no conflicts of interest.”)

Following Holman’s car accident, he was told his recovery could take months. In mid-April, however, he left the hospital ahead of schedule, disregarding the gentle advice of friends and doctors. “I had to get the heck out of there,” he says. There was simply too much work to do.

IN MAY, I MET HOLMAN AT HIS CAPITOL HILL CONDO. THE DOORS ON THE ROOMS had been taken off their hinges—the better for him to squeeze his wheelchair, just barely, from the kitchen to the bedroom to the living room, which was doubling as his office.

Sitting behind a desk, Holman was busy. His phone rang constantly. He had just submitted an op-ed to the *Hill* arguing that Congress should ban lawmakers from trading individual stocks, to squelch potential conflicts of interest and the possibility of insider trading. He was lobbying members from both parties to support presidential-inauguration funding reforms,

making the case that while the stench of buying access was particularly strong during Trump’s inauguration in January—a number of corporations and individual billionaires paid at least \$1 million each for exclusive access to events and to the President’s political inner sanctum—future Presidents from either party could attempt to match or exceed the nearly \$240 million that Trump’s inaugural committee raised. That’s about four times what President Joe Biden, who himself took heat for courting corporate interests, raised for his 2021 inauguration.

Because Holman still couldn’t walk, physical therapists were making house calls. (Sometimes, says Holman’s friend Michiko Bonawitz, he gets so wrapped up in his work that “he needs to be reminded to call his doctors.”) As Holman talked about his legislative goals, he sent numerous emails. Occasionally, a wince of pain broke through his smile.

“Maybe I came back too early,” he said, gingerly wheeling himself across the room. “But I fear that we’re going to lose democracy. When you look at history, no democracy has ever survived. That’s pretty motivating for me.”

A sense of high-minded urgency has long motivated reformers such as Holman. The term “goo-goo” was first used—sometimes derisively—in the late 1800s to describe candidates and groups working against corruption and old-school machine politics in places like Chicago and New York City. Over time, their ideas went national, and goo-goos were instrumental in Progressive Era efforts to increase government transparency, reduce graft, replace patronage with merit-based hiring, and otherwise professionalize civil service. Subsequent waves of reform often have come in response to scandals:

Washington is filled with “goo-goos”—advocates for “good government” who fight to regulate lobbyists, reform political-money laws, keep lawmakers honest, and “drain the swamp” in the pre-Trump sense of the term.

Most notably, Watergate led to stricter rules around campaign finance, greater checks on executive power, and the creation of a number of government watchdogs.

Holman's interest in good government goes back decades. Raised in Minnesota, he studied philosophy and political science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the late 1970s, then earned a doctorate in political science and government from the University of Southern California. He worked at the now-defunct Center for Governmental Studies, a California nonprofit that researched and recommended policy



ABOVE: Holman supported a 2015 bill from Wisconsin Democratic senator Tammy Baldwin (right) and former Maryland Democratic representative Elijah Cummings (second from left) to limit conflicts of interest for government officials moving into the private sector—and vice versa.

LEFT: Holman speaking at a 2015 rally opposing DC mayor Muriel Bowser's negotiated settlement allowing power companies Exelon and Pepco to merge, which happened around the same time Pepco cut a \$25 million deal with the District for naming rights to the area around Audi Field.

reforms, then moved across the country in 2000 to join the Brennan Center for Justice, a progressive law-and-policy institute at New York University's law school.

Most of Holman's work in those years was academic. He wrote books such as *To Govern Ourselves: Ballot Initiatives in the Los Angeles Area* and journal articles like "Access Delayed Is Access Denied: Electronic Reporting of Campaign Finance Records," the sort of deeply researched and considered reports that provide intellectual ammunition for reformers battling in the legislative trenches. In 2002, however, Public Citizen asked him to come to Washington and shake things up in person as a government-affairs lobbyist.

At the time, Holman was nearing 50. Making the move would mean reinventing himself professionally—going from political scientist to lobbyist, from think tank

to shark tank—and moving to a city he'd only visited. But Public Citizen's offer would allow him to put theory into action, and to advocate directly for the principles he believed in. Upon arriving in DC, Holman hopped into a taxi. "The cab driver is playing NPR on the radio," he recalls, "I said, 'I think I can fit in here.'" Holman took the job.

"It turned out that it combines everything I like doing," he says. "You teach a class, and that's thrilling, but you don't know if you've actually had an impact. With lobbying, I will know if I succeeded or not."

SUCCESS ISN'T EASY. AFTER ALL, HOLMAN IS A LOBBYIST WHO LOBBIES AGAINST other lobbyists—working to reduce their power, or that of their clients, all on behalf of policies that often put metaphorical handcuffs on the lawmakers elected to enact them.

On Capitol Hill and K Street, that makes him a rarity. In 2024, more than 13,000 registered federal lobbyists prowled the corridors of Congress and federal agencies—a 14-year high, according to the nonprofit research organization OpenSecrets. The vast majority represented corporations, trade associations, unions, or narrow-focus special-interest groups. Just a tiny fraction could ever in good faith call themselves goo-goods.

Of that sliver, few stay in the arena as long as Holman has. The hours are long, and public advocacy isn't exactly known for its financial rewards—if you're eyeing a nice place in Chevy Chase or thinking about sending your kids to Sidwell Friends, you're probably getting paid to work against whatever reforms Holman is proposing. Following tours of

duty at organizations like Common Cause and the Campaign Legal Center, many goo-gooes exit altogether, instead finding gigs in government, electoral politics, consulting, law, or even representing corporate or special interests. “It’s great work, but it’s hard work,” says Fred Wertheimer, a longtime good-government advocate as well as founder and president of the nonpartisan government-reform group Democracy 21. “Not for everyone.”

Holman’s relationship to lawmakers is also unusual. On one hand, few members of Congress are flatly unwilling to take his calls or otherwise entertain his efforts. He’s earned the respect of Democrats and Republicans alike—in part because of his reputation for honesty and fairness, in part because the sound of his baritone voice means you might be in his sights. “Craig’s infuriated people on both sides, and he didn’t particularly care who he was offending by his work,” says former Pennsylvania Republican representative Charlie Dent, who previously worked with Holman to tighten rules around lawmakers’ and staffers’ acceptance of privately funded travel. “He was looking to do what’s right. He wasn’t looking to make friends.”

On the other hand, Holman’s aversion to cozying up to power makes him a perpetual outsider. After hours, you’re far more likely to find him at an H Street dive bar with his friends than at the downtown restaurants where lobbyists and lawmakers schmooze and make deals. Holman can’t leverage the one simple trick available to so many of his corporate cousins: campaign contributions. Ever since the Supreme Court’s 2010 *Citizens United* decision supercharged American political spending, money has dominated congressional and presidential elections in a way that makes the Watergate era look quaint.

Adjusted for inflation, the combined cost of the presidential and all congressional races in 2012 was about \$8.6 billion. The 2024 election, meanwhile, cost more than \$15.9 billion, with increasingly nationalized congressional races driving much of that spike, according to OpenSecrets. Viewed another way, the Federal Election Commission, which regulates and enforces the nation’s federal campaign laws, processed about 50 million campaign-finance transactions during the 2012 presidential election cycle. Twelve years later, during the 2024 cycle, it processed more than 500 million transactions, according to agency records.

“I’m glad to not be involved in that, but it is a huge disadvantage,” Holman says. “I don’t have access to money, and quite frankly, money usually wins—I’ve got to

By tipping off the television news show *60 Minutes*, Holman helped create public pressure for the passage of the STOCK Act, a bill regulating stock trading by members of Congress, which President Obama signed into law in 2012.

Holman’s first major victory came after the Jack Abramoff scandal, when he helped draft and attract support for the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007, legislation that clamped down on lobbying.

admit that. What I do have is mobilizing the public to get involved. I can once in a while beat money with that.”

Holman’s first major victory came in the mid-aughts, after a massive scandal centered on former lobbyist Jack Abramoff resulted in federal bribery or corruption convictions for Abramoff and nearly two dozen others, including White House officials, congressional staffers, and former Ohio Republican representative Bob Ney. Amid the ethical wreckage and heightened public awareness, Holman saw an opportunity. He drafted legislation to clamp down on lobbying, workshopped the text with congressional offices—writing and rewriting and writing some more—and attracted powerful lawmakers to his cause, including Republican Kentucky senator Mitch McConnell and former Nevada Democratic senator Harry Reid. That work became the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007—a laundry list of political-influence and campaign-finance reforms that bolstered lobbying-spending disclosure, corralled gift-giving, and codified criminal penalties for certain violations.

“I’ve got to draft it,” Holman says of his hands-on approach to that bill. “I can’t just offer ideas or bullet points or it’s not going to be anywhere near what I’m thinking of. And then, at the right time, you’ve got to let it go and let other people take over.”

In 2011, a producer for *60 Minutes* called Holman looking for story ideas. Holman pitched an idea he’d been working on for months: banning members of Congress from trading individual stocks, via a little-known bill that was going nowhere on Capitol Hill, the Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge Act. The producer liked the



PHOTOGRAPH BY WIN McNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES

idea, and a subsequent broadcast report on congressional stock trading proved damning. Numerous lawmakers refused to speak with reporter Steve Kroft. California Democrat Nancy Pelosi, then speaker of the House, grew defensive when asked about her husband's stock deals. During interviews outside the Capitol, several members admitted they'd never heard of the bill.

The next year, Congress passed a version of the STOCK Act. While Holman didn't appear in the *60 Minutes* report, Public Citizen co-president Robert Weissman says it "changed the dynamics overnight. And the conditions for that happening wouldn't have been in place if Craig had not been plowing away and pushing that rock up the hill."

The pushing never really stops. For goo-goos, wins are rare, often partial, and seldom permanent. The STOCK Act created rules, disclosure requirements, and penalties around congressional stock trading. It did not actually ban the practice. In recent years, Holman has worked on numerous efforts that haven't made much progress, including one to grant the US Office of Government Ethics—an independent agency that oversees executive-branch financial disclosures and conflict-of-interest rules—the power to enforce those rules.

Holman also has seen backsliding. In New Jersey, for instance, he once helped write some of the country's strictest limits on the amount of money that companies doing business with the state can give to political parties. Two years ago, however, a major overhaul of the state's campaign-finance laws loosened and removed those restrictions, resulting in a surge of donations. As for the aforementioned Office of Government Ethics? Earlier this year, it shrugged after *Fortune* reported that Trump's Small Business Administration leader, Kelly Loeffler, retained a seven-figure investment in the parent company of Newsmax while regularly appearing on the conservative TV network

to tout MAGA priorities. (An SBA spokesperson told *Fortune* that OGE reviewed Loeffler's financial holdings and that she upholds "all ethics rules and requirements.")

"This is not even a marathon, it's aerobics in hell, a game you can't win," says Meredith McGehee, who has spent more than 30 years working in public-interest advocacy, most recently as executive director of Issue One, a nonprofit that advocates for campaign-finance reform. "But Craig is one of those people who figured that out and made peace with it. He gets that 'democracy' is a verb, something you do."

BACK IN HIS CONDO, HOLMAN IS STILL DEMOCRACY-ING. HE'S A PROLIFIC MULTI-tasker—Oregon Democratic senator Jeff Merkley says Holman has "personally been involved with every good-government effort I take on," including prohibiting gambling on elections and enhancing travelers' privacy during Transportation Security Administration screening—but at this moment, he's focused on a particular goal: finishing what the STOCK Act started.

Working the phones with the office of Rhode Island Democratic representative Seth Magaziner, Holman is pitching the Transparent Representation Upholding Service and Trust in Congress Act, which would require members—plus their spouses and dependent children—to either divest from owning individual stocks or place those assets in a blind trust while in office. With cosponsors including ultraconservative Texas Republican representative Chip Roy and ultraliberal Michigan Democratic representative Rashida Tlaib, the bill has bipartisan backing—and even support from Trump, who said in April that he would "absolutely" sign legislation banning congressional stock trading if it crossed his desk.

Holman is optimistic about the bill's prospects. For one, House leadership from both parties recently gave it the okay to move forward. Perhaps more important, the STOCK Act's limitations have become increasingly apparent. In recent years, dozens of representatives have violated it. Members of the House and Senate Armed Services committees actively buy and sell defense-contractor stocks; many other Congress members personally invest in industries their committees oversee. A number of representatives made a flurry of trades before and after Trump's "Liberation Day" tariff announcements, raising questions about what they knew and whether they were trying to personally profit off executive policy changes. On Wall Street, there are two exchange-traded funds (one Democratic, one Republican) that follow congressional stock trades and allow investors to profit from them. Meanwhile, several websites and social-media accounts spit out regular updates on which lawmaker is trading what—including the "Nancy Pelosi Stock Tracker," which follows all of Pelosi's husband's trades and boasts 1.1 million followers on X. (A Pelosi spokesperson recently told the *Times* of London that she doesn't own stocks and has no prior knowledge or subsequent involvement in her husband's transactions.) "This is a moment, an inflection point," Holman says. "The comparison to what happened right before the STOCK Act is inevitable."

Of course, there's no guarantee the TRUST in Congress Act, or any of several similar bills, will make it to Trump's desk. Anything from congressional inertia to partisan bickering over details could leave it dead in the legislative water, floating listlessly alongside previously failed stock-ban bills introduced during the past two congressional sessions. Such is a goo-goo's fate. Still, Holman wouldn't have it any other way. Sure, the wins are affirming—but the fights and losses along the way are energizing. The nation, he says, needs someone to stand up for the little guys, people who will never trade a stock, never have the means to donate \$100 or \$1,000 or \$1 million to a political cause, never come to Washington in the first place.

Abramoff, the disgraced former lobbyist, concurs. In the years since his scandal, he and Holman have struck up an unlikely friendship. "Some of the corruption [in Washington] breaks the law, but much of it is perfectly legal," Abramoff told *Washingtonian* in an email. "That is why Craig will never be a dinosaur. He's trying to fix a broken system—and until that is done, he will be needed."

When Holman was hospitalized, he had plenty of time to consider his future. Should he slow down? Work part-time or consult? Clear more space for his personal passions, like astronomy and Norwegian history? Was it finally time to train a successor and let someone else push the rock toward the hilltop? Laid up in bed, newscasts playing overhead, Holman had only one answer. "I'll never quit," he said. "It will be someone else who tells me it's over. Not me." One must imagine him happy. **W**

Goo-goo work is "not even a marathon, it's aerobics in hell, a game you can't win. But Craig gets that 'democracy' is a verb, something you do."

Dave Levinthal is an investigative journalist in DC who writes about money, power, and politics for publications including Rolling Stone, Fortune, Columbia Journalism Review, and NOTUS.





30 BEST BURGERS

**30 of our
favorites,
from bistro
burgers
to smashies**



By Ann Limpert,
Jessica Sidman,
and Ike Allen

with reporting by
Jane Godiner



We traveled hundreds of miles—searching everywhere from gas stations to food halls to pizza joints to fancy dining rooms—to find the very best burgers in the area. Here’s where to go, whether you’re craving a cheap (but perfect!) double cheeseburger or a truffle-aïoli-slathered patty on a housemade potato bun.

SHRIMP KATSU BURGER ↻

PERRY'S

1811 Columbia Rd., NW
American McDonald's have Filet-O-Fish. Japanese McDonald's, though, make a version with shrimp. Chef Masako Morishita credits a craving for the latter as inspo for this crispy, deep-fried patty of hand-chopped shrimp. It hits all the pleasure centers with cheddar, lemony slaw, and togarashi-spiced tartar sauce. We'd super-size it if we could.



PREVIOUS SPREAD, PHOTOGRAPH BY SCOTT SUCHMAN; FOOD STYLING BY LISA CHERKASKY; THIS PAGE, PHOTOGRAPH BY SCOTT SUCHMAN



WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE BURGER TOPPINGS?

“

I'm a sucker for a cheesy burger. I gravitate towards American because it melts the best. But if it's fresh off the grill and I'm right there and the cheddar is melted perfectly and hasn't hardened, then I love a cheddar burger.”

—**Patrice Cleary**
Chef/owner of Purple Patch and Joia Burger

PROPER BURGER ↗
DUKE'S GROCERY

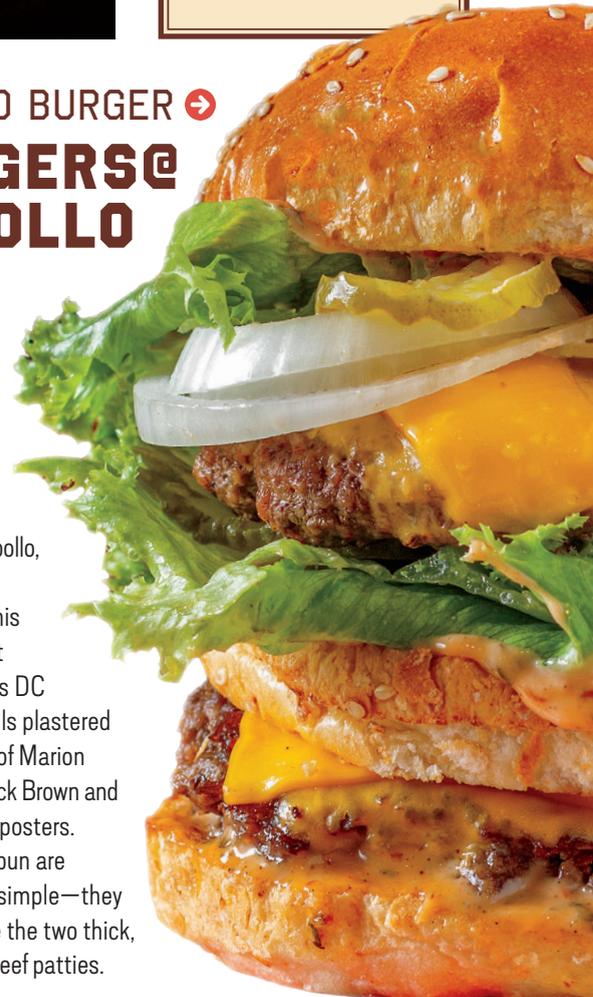
Dupont Circle, Foggy Bottom, Potomac (Duke's Grocery); Woodley Park (Duke's Counter)
 What sets one of the city's top burgers apart? The superb crackly-topped brioche bun, one of the best in the business, and the double cheeseburger's sweet but not cloying chili sauce. The mini-chain's cozy Anglophilic locations and friendly service are a big part of the equation.

CHEESEBURGER
**BLACK SALT
 BLACK SUGAR**

2826 Fairfax Dr., Falls Church
 Owner Youssef Rhanime channeled the flavors of his Moroccan roots when coming up with his signature burger. The halal smash patties get a kick from a ten-spice blend that includes paprika, cumin, and turmeric. The brioche-sandwiched meat is accented with a sweet-leaning special sauce, plus lettuce, tomato, pickles, and American cheese.

APOLLO BURGER ↘
**BURGERS@
 APOLLO**

4531 Telfair Blvd., Camp Springs
 Our dream backyard burger looks a lot like the Apollo, the signature sandwich at this strip-mall spot that celebrates DC culture, its walls plastered with portraits of Marion Barry and Chuck Brown and go-go concert posters. Toppings and bun are grocery-store simple—they don't outshine the two thick, flame-licked beef patties.



PHOTOGRAPH OF DUKE'S GROCERY BURGER BY DEB LINDSEY; BURGERS @APOLLO COURTESY OF RESTAURANT; CLEARY BY ALBERT TING

DOUBLE ↪
CHEESEBURGER
**JOIA
BURGER**

3213 Mount Pleasant St., NW;
2414 Wisconsin Ave., NW

Purple Patch owner Patrice Cleary makes the city's best smash burger (and there's a lot of competition) at her cheerful Mount Pleasant and Glover Park shops. Cleary uses American Wagyu for the patties and a genius topping: a blend of chopped pickles, lettuce, onion, and tomato bound in special sauce, so every bite is a perfect one.



THE GOLD RUSH ↗
**SOCIAL
BURGER**

350 Maple Ave. W., Vienna

A little sweetness, a little crunch, a little spiciness, and a lot of satisfaction is what you get when you bite into this fast-casual spot's Southwestern-accented burger. The single patty is loaded with housemade pickles and pickled jalapeños, pepperjack, freshly fried onion rings, and a mustardy, Carolina-style barbecue sauce that's also made in the restaurant's kitchen.



WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE
BURGER IN THE AREA?

“

Primrose [in Brookland]. They've always had great burgers, and now they're doing a sort of smash burger with charred onions. And you have to have awesome fries with a burger—and they have my condiment of choice for fries, which is mayo.”

—*Jeanine Prime*
Chef/owner of Cane and St. James



JALAPEÑO BURGER ↗
JON'S JOINT

250 N. Glebe Rd., Arlington

A mere potato bun can't contain the thinly pressed halal-beef saucers at this no-frills joint, decorated with Godzilla, Pokémon, and other pop-culture artwork. Despite literally overflowing, these smash burgers are easy to inhale, particularly when topped with pickled jalapeños, grilled onions, pepperjack cheese, and a spicy special sauce.

PHOTOGRAPH OF PRIME BY SCOTT SUCHMAN; OTHERS COURTESY OF RESTAURANTS



What's your take on buns?

"The potato bun is the winner. Brioche, as fancy as it sounds, does not structurally hold up at all. It's made of nothing but eggs and butter. So basically, you put a delicious, perfectly caramelized, 20-percent-fat patty on a brioche bun and five minutes later it's breaking down. It sucks up all the grease and the fat and juice, and it's just terrible."

—**David Guas**
Chef/owner of *Neutral Ground*
and *Bayou Bakery*



What about grocery-store beef?

"When you buy your patties already made in a supermarket, smash them down a little bit with the tips of your fingers. Make it flat, flat, flat and very thin. Because when you cook it, it will retract. Brush it with soft butter on both sides and salt, pepper, whatever you want. Put that on a very hot grill or flat-top, it's going to be delicious. And brush some butter or beef fat on the buns and put them on the grill for ten or 20 seconds. It makes a big difference."

—**David Deshaies**
Chef/co-owner of *Unconventional Diner*



What should I put on my burgers at home?

"The most important thing is seasoning: a liberal amount of salt and pepper—like, way more than you think is the right amount. Especially if you're doing a thick, eight-ounce burger."

—**Matt Adler**
Chef/partner at *Caruso's Grocery*
and *Cucina Morini*



How do you cook burgers at home?

"A cast-iron skillet or griddle is going to be great—you want heat. The problem with some home-cooked burgers is that people will get the pan kind of hot because they're scared to smash the burger down, and then the temperature drops. By the next flip, or even on that side, it's simmering, not searing. Cast iron is going to retain that heat. If you're melting cheese, put an ice cube or a little water in the pan, cover it, and it'll melt really quickly."

—**Rock Harper**
Chef/owner of *Queen Mother's*



What's the ideal percentage of fat in ground beef?

"If you're doing it on a griddle, you want a burger with fat content that's a little bit higher—80/20. If you're doing it on a grill, 85/15. Too much fat creates too much grease—and a lot of fire."

—**Elias Tadesse**
Chef/owner of *Mélange Foods*

KITCHEN
IN YOUR
TOGETHER
YOUR
HOME



← THE CLASSIC MÉLANGE FOODS

2108 Eighth St., NW

Mélange, one of DC's best (but most short-lived) burger places, has made a comeback in Shaw. And while chef Elias Taddesse brilliantly weaves Ethiopian flavors into the tacos and fried chicken, his dry-aged cheeseburger tastes all-American. There are, however, some subtle fine-dining touches: dry-aged beef, pickled onions instead of ketchup, and a brown-butter aioli he learned to make at a Michelin two-star restaurant in France.



WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE BURGER IN THE AREA?

“

I've got a weird one for you. It's called Goldmiss, a mochi-doughnut-and-hot-dog shop inside H Mart [in Fairfax], and it's currently my favorite burger place. It's a bulgogi burger with pickled radish and the best crinkly fries I've ever had.”

—Jonathan Krinn
Chef/owner of Elyse

PARIS BURGER MELT GOURMET CHEESEBURGERS

525 E. Market St., Leesburg

It's worth a road trip for this destination burger. The thick house-ground aged-beef patty is balanced by a zing of Dijon mustard, the sweet umami of roasted garlic, balsamic-glazed onions, and thick slabs of Brie. Also noteworthy are the housemade buns—airy and soft, yet sturdy enough to contain the jaw-stretching stack.

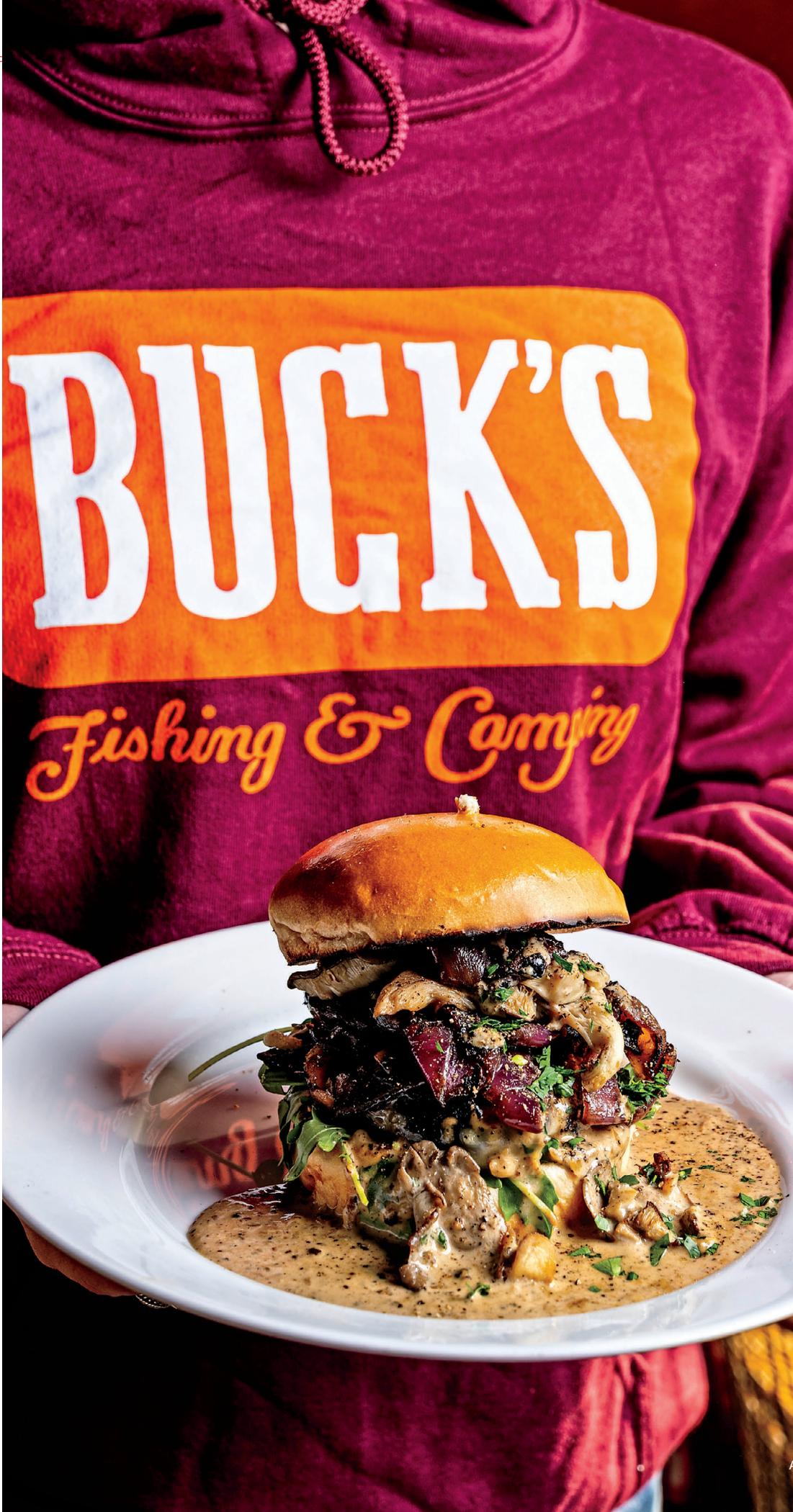
CHEESEBURGER → PASTIS

1323 Fourth St., NE

Le Diplomate has long held the crown for best French-bistro burger in the city, and while it's still great, the eight-ounce cheeseburger at its Union Market sibling is even tastier. Credit a blend of brisket, chuck, and short rib from Pat LaFrieda; buns baked daily at nearby Bread Alley; and just the right amount of pickles, onions, and special sauce. Bonus: It's a mere \$9.99 at lunch.



THIS PAGE: PHOTOGRAPH OF MÉLANGE FOODS BURGER BY REY LOPEZ; PASTIS BY SCOTT SUCHMAN; OPPOSITE PAGE: PHOTOGRAPH OF BUCK'S FISHING & CAMPING BURGER BY SCOTT SUCHMAN; LOCAL PROVISIONS COURTESY OF RESTAURANT



BUCK'S

Fishing & Camping



LAMB BURGER ↗

LOCAL PROVISIONS

46286 Cranston St., Sterling

At this hopping American bistro in Cascades Marketplace, you'll see a *lot* of lamb burgers coming out of the open kitchen. Take that as a cue. The patties are crafted from Elysian Fields farm lamb, set on slabs of housemade sourdough focaccia, and finished with fresh dill, long hot peppers, roasted tomatoes, and, instead of cheese, plenty of labneh.

↖ DRY-AGED BURGER

BUCK'S FISHING & CAMPING

5031 Connecticut Ave., NW

Chevy Chase DC's favorite cozy neighborhood restaurant still masters Americana—not least the thick, wood-grilled customizable burger fashioned from dry-aged beef. The au poivre burger—a rotating special slathered with a sharp, peppery pan sauce and topped with fistfuls of arugula and slow-cooked red onions—is worth seeking out, too.



← THE STANDARD BURGER GARDEN DISTRICT

1801 14th St., NW

This is the platonic ideal of a neighborhood cookout burger. It's not too thick or thin, plenty juicy, and bears a whiff of char from the grill. Nothing fancy—it comes with pickles, tomatoes, onions, and special sauce—but perfect for an afternoon hang at this beloved little urban beer garden.

CHOPPED ↓ CHEESE BURGER EMMY SQUARED

1300 Fourth St., SE;
1924 Eighth St., NW;
124 King St., Alexandria

This Brooklyn-born pizza shop has long been famous for its massive Le Big Matt burger. But this humbler homage to NYC bodega sandwiches, with ground beef, American cheese, onions, and peppers—chopped together on a griddle, then piled on a pretzel bun—deserves all the glory these days.



NEW ENGLAND SMASH BURGER ↑ THE SALT LINE

79 Potomac Ave., SE; 4040 Wilson Blvd., Arlington; 7284 Woodmont Ave., Bethesda

Ordering a burger at a restaurant devoted to New England seafood might seem unwise. But chef Kyle Bailey was an early player in the smash-burger scene and has been sending out messily delicious thin-patty cheeseburgers for more than eight years. When it comes to accessories, he keeps things familiar: iceberg lettuce, thick-sliced tomatoes, sweet pickles, and a mayo-slathered potato roll.

PHOTOGRAPH OF SALT LINE BURGER BY SCOTT SUCHMAN; OTHERS COURTESY OF RESTAURANTS

- ➔ **Fancy French fries at BOURBON STEAK**
2800 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
- ♥ **Fried pickle spears at TUNE INN**
331½ Pennsylvania Ave., SE
- ♥ **Sweet-potato tots at SOCIAL BURGER**
350 Maple Ave. W., Vienna
- ♥ **Tot-chos (tots-meet-nachos) at QUARRY HOUSE TAVERN**
8401 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring
- ♥ **Onion rings with balsamic dip at MELT GOURMET CHEESEBURGERS**
525 E. Market St., Leesburg



- ♥ **Spiced cheese curds at BLACK SALT BLACK SUGAR**
2826 Fallfax Dr., Falls Church
- ➔ **Fried pickled jalapeños with yogurt dip at BUCK'S FISHING & CAMPING**
5031 Connecticut Ave., NW

OUR ABSOLUTE FAVORITE FRIED SNACKS

**SO
ON
THE**

THE FRENCHIE ⬇️ GHOSTBURGER



1250 Ninth St., NW

This lightly smashed four-ounce patty, gilded with buttery cremini mushrooms, deeply caramelized onions, and Fourme d'Ambert blue cheese, nails the whole salty-sweet thing. The burger's compactness calls to mind a drive-through, but the quality of the beef and its toppings are far superior to any fast food.



WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE BURGER TOPPINGS?

“

Onions, American cheese, and mayonnaise. I prefer raw and caramelized onions. Once you sear the meat, put the caramelized onion on top, then melt the cheese. Then, when you build it, add the raw onions on top.”

—**Paolo Dungca**
Chef at Hiraya
(currently closed but relocating)
and, formerly, Pogiboy

DOUBLE CHEESEBURGER STEEZE BURGER

Steezeburgers.com

Hunter Karametos's mobile cook-out operation draws crowds wherever it shows up (often at suburban breweries). He sets up a tent and griddle and starts whipping through orders for the one thing he serves: three-ounce smash patties—available single, double, or triple—with American cheese, pickles, steamed onions, and a Martin's potato roll. Sounds straightforward, tastes divine.

VEGGIE BURGER WOODMONT GRILL

7715 Woodmont Ave., Bethesda

For more than two decades, this Bethesda dining room, part of the Hillstone chain, has been known for its expert burgers. It's the veggie version—fashioned from rice, beans, and prunes and sheened with a sweet soy glaze—that's singular (and oft imitated). It comes with excellent skinny fries, but the creamy chopped coleslaw is destination-worthy, too.



THE CAPITAL BURGER CAPITAL BURGER

1005 Seventh St., NW

This steakhouse spin-off isn't cheap, but it feels generous, with big, precision-cooked burgers that come with fries or, if you wish, a Caesar or kale salad. The signature French-onion-style house burger is juicy, with rich layers of flavor—caramelized onions, shallot aioli, and a burnished, torched coating of grand cru Gruyère.



WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE BURGER TOPPINGS?

“

I'm a pickles guy, some variation of a Big Mac sauce. I like a little bit of raw onion. Always a cheeseburger. Never bacon, never tomato, never lettuce. Lettuce on a burger? Snack.”

—Jeremiah Langhorne
Chef/owner of the Dabney
and Petite Cerise

SALMON BURGER BURGER SHOP

3809 Rhode Island Ave.,
Brentwood

Restaurant vet Ismael Montero is best known for his hit taco spot, La Michoacana, inside Mixt food hall. Turns out he makes a pretty great burger, too. Walk over to his nearby stand and start with this salmon patty slathered with chili mayo and pickled veggies. It eats like a great fish sandwich but is as satisfying as any good burger.



THIS PAGE: PHOTOGRAPH OF WOODMONT GRILL BURGER BY EYV MAGES; LANGHORNE BY ANDREW CEBULKA; OTHERS COURTESY OF RESTAURANTS; OPPOSITE PAGE: PHOTOGRAPH OF AVENTINO BURGER BY SCOTT SUCHMAN; FOOD STYLING BY LISA CHERKASKY; 7TH STREET BURGER COURTESY OF RESTAURANT



DOUBLE 
CHEESEBURGER
**7TH STREET
BURGER**

1424 Wisconsin Ave., NW

This burger operation—which started as a carryout in the East Village a mere four years ago and has since ballooned to 21 locations, including Georgetown—has a downright obsessive following. And if smash burgers are your thing, it’s not hard to taste why. These American-cheese-topped creations are sloppy and greasy in the best way, with lacy-edged patties, plenty of pickles, and almost too much special sauce.

 **AVENTINO
BURGER**

AVENTINO

**4747 Bethesda Ave.,
Bethesda**

The juicy lunchtime burger here might feel out of whack with the otherwise Italian menu—until you take a bite. The patty, made from Randall Lineback beef, seared in a cast-iron pan, and placed on a housemade bun, is done up with arugula, red onions cooked down in balsamic, and Fontina Val d’Aosta cheese, which gets perfectly melty as it’s basted in butter.



PUEBLA BURGER ↕
HILL EAST BURGER

1432 Pennsylvania Ave., SE

Charred-poblano relish and smoky cheddar add an extra campfire dimension to our favorite burger at this cute Southwestern outpost on the Hill, where all the burgers are cold-smoked before hitting the grill. Squeeze in on a Tuesday night, when everything is half-price, and queue up some Willie Nelson on the vintage jukebox.

BIG PAPA DELUXE ➔
BUN PAPA

1512 Belle View Blvd., Alexandria; 3648 King St., Alexandria

We have one quibble with this double cheeseburger: It's ginormous. But even if it's tricky to eat, this is a thing of beauty, with juicy seared patties made with sirloin, rib eye, and chuck, plus cheddar, crunchy lettuce, pickles, and special sauce. Part of what makes it so tasty is the grilled brioche bun, made in-house—these burger carryouts are the brainchild of the team behind the Bread & Water Co. bakery.



PHOTOGRAPH OF HILL EAST BURGER BY CHRIS SVETLIK; BUN PAPA COURTESY OF RESTAURANT

REMIK MASTERS

When is a cheeseburger not a cheeseburger? When it's a taco, a pizza, or tater tots. Try these clever reinterpretations, which transform a classic burger's flavors in unexpected ways.



TACO

The Small Biggie Burger taco at **Taco Bamba**—an homage to the Golden Arches—features a patty-melt burger, cheese, tangy “pickle de gallo,” and Thousand Island, all cradled in a soft flour tortilla.

Multiple area locations



MAC AND CHEESE

Taking inspiration from In-N-Out's Double Double “Animal Style” burger, the five-cheese mac at **Matt & Tony's** is piled with burger bits, caramelized onion, tomatoes, pickles, shredduce, and secret sauce. A toasted slider bun is served on the side.

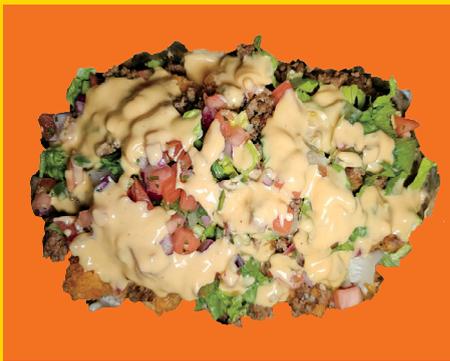
1501 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria



PIZZA

The “Harambe Loved Big Macs” pizza at **Boogy & Peel** is slathered with special sauce; dotted with American cheese, well-seasoned ground beef, shredded iceberg lettuce, white onions, and dill pickles; and finished with a zigzag of more special sauce.

1 Dupont Cir., NW



TATER TOTS

Built on a mound of golden fried tots, the “McTotchos” served at **Union Pub** come decked out with ground beef, pickles, lettuce, tomato, diced red onion, and a ladleful of melted cheese. Napoleon Dynamite would surely approve.

201 Massachusetts Ave., NE



BURRITO

Chef Nate Anda's longtime love for fast food shines in his plancha-cripsed burrito at the Del Ray location of **Hi/Fi Taco**. It's plump with two smash burgers chopped together with American cheese, Thousand Island dressing, pickles, and more.

2000 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria



FRIES

The ultra-spicy cheeseburger riff at **7th Street Burger** takes a bed of crispy fries and crowns it with a diced burger, American cheese, grilled onions, a barrage of jalapeños, and tongue-torcing ghost-pepper sauce.

1424 Wisconsin Ave., NW

—NEVIN MARTELL

PHOTOGRAPH OF TACO BY GREG POWERS; MAC AND CHEESE BY MACK ORDAY/LEADING DC; PIZZA BY KIM KONG/NOM DIGITAL; BURRITO BY JOHN ROPRA PAUGH/LEADING DC; OTHERS COURTESY OF RESTAURANTS

DOUBLE CHEESEBURGER UNCONVENTIONAL DINER

1207 Ninth St., NW

Love the crispy edges of a smash burger but crave the heftiness of a bigger patty? This double Wagyu burger—with nearly a half pound of Roseda beef—is for you. Before the meat is pressed on the searing-hot flat-top, it’s brushed with butter amped with Montreal Steak Seasoning. The toppings are by-the-book, but there’s thought behind them: Those caramelized onions have been cooking down for five hours.



WHAT'S YOUR PREFERRED STYLE OF BURGER?

“

I like more of a pub style. Cook it on a flat-top so you can layer sautéed onions and bacon. All of the flavors meld together on the griddle.”

—Denise Lee
Chef/owner of Social Burger

BACON JALAPEÑO BURGER SWIZZLER

1259 First St., SE

“If we were going to make McDonald’s for millennials,” Swizzler co-owner Jesse Konig once mused to *Washingtonian*, “what would that look like?” His answer is this Navy Yard fast-casual place, which serves grass-fed-beef burgers, shakes made with Maryland ice cream, and fries sizzling in avocado oil. Picking favorites here isn’t easy, but right now we’re going for a double smash burger with bacon and candied jalapeños.



ROYAL SMOKED BURGER BURGER DISTRICT

2024 Wilson Blvd., Arlington

This place excels at well-proportioned burgers cooked to specification, whether you’re posting up to watch a Nats game or want a patty that travels well. Among the dozen options, the Royal Smoked Burger is a home run, with its sweet barbecue ranch sauce, applewood-smoked bacon, crispy onion strings, and fried egg with a saucy yolk.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF RESTAURANTS



AHI TUNA BURGER 

CENTRAL MICHEL RICHARD

1001 Pennsylvania Ave., NW

The spirit of the late, great DC chef Michel Richard is very much alive at the buzzing bistro that bears his name. The tuna burger—one of a few luxe patties here—has been on the menu since he opened the place in 2007. Rare, chopped tuna is layered on a glossy bun with a crunchy potato wafer, confit tomato, and gingery mayo.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARIAH MIRANDA

CHEESEBURGER SUNSHINE GENERAL STORE

22300 Georgia Ave.,
Brookeville

The ambience at this dusty old gas-station luncheonette, which feels frozen at some point in the LBJ administration, is as old-school and regional as area restaurants get: An Orioles game will likely be on, and you're substantially more likely to get called "hon" here than you are 15 minutes down the road to the south. Burgers are straightforward, greasy, endlessly customizable—and delicious.



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LUCKY BUN ➔ BURGER LUCKY BUNS

2000 18th St., NW;
1309 Fifth St., NE;
Reagan National Airport

The simpler the burger, the more you appreciate the details. Alex McCoy's burger bars experiment successfully with out-there toppings like bacon XO jam and Thai-chili mumbo sauce. But with the simple Lucky Bun—topped with Gouda, pickles, arugula, and charred red onion—you pick up on the kitchen's mastery of something more difficult: The patties are smashed to a crisp yet still juicy.



WHAT'S YOUR CHEESE OF CHOICE?

“

There's no better cheese than American. Save the fun cheese for grilled cheeses in the home, and some good American cheese for the burger—even cheddar doesn't really work. I don't want queso on a burger, either.”

—**Kyle Bailey**
Chef/partner at the Salt Line
and Ometeo

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF RESTAURANTS

THOMPSON
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WE KNOW HOW TO BURGER

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LIFE, TRAVEL & HEALTH

SUNNY SIDE UP

Turn the page for an end-of-summer bucket list, including picking cheery sunflowers.



PHOTOGRAPH BY KRYSZYNA CHERKASHYNA/GETTY IMAGES



Take a spin on classic carnival rides at the Howard County Fair.



Don't Sweat It

Summer isn't over yet. Here's how to squeeze the most out of the rest of the season.

By Daniella Byck and Briana Thomas

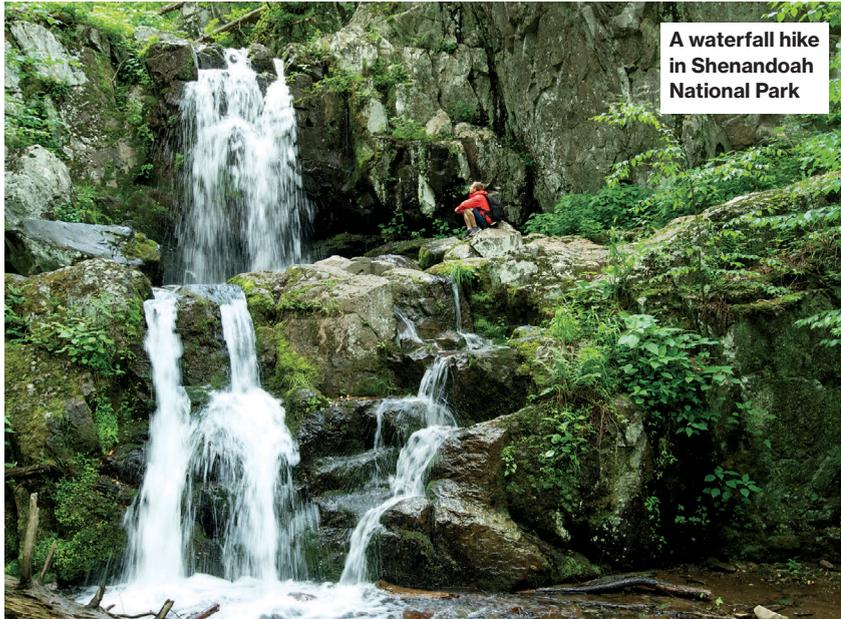
Play at a Fair

County fairs are a nostalgic end-of-summer tradition for all ages, with carnival attractions, pony rides, and indulgent funnel cake and cheesesteaks. View prize-winning baked goods and pigs at the **Howard County Fair**, August 2 through 9, or meet scaly creatures at the **Charles County Fair's** Reptile World in La Plata, September 11 through 14. Thrill-seekers can head to the **Prince William County Fair**—the largest fair in Virginia—for dirt-flying monster trucks and demolition derbies in Manassas, August 8 through 16.



The massive outdoor screen at Bengies

TOP PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF HOWARD COUNTY FAIR; BOTTOM BY LAUREN BULBIN



A waterfall hike in Shenandoah National Park

Hit the Sand

Even if you can't make it to the ocean this summer, there are easy places to dip your toes in the water within 90 minutes of the city. Drive an hour and a half to Maryland's **Gunpowder Falls State Park**, offering 1,500 feet of beach and river swimming in the Hammerman Area, plus canoe and kayak rentals. For sandy shores that are sprinkled with sharks' teeth, **Flag Ponds Nature Park** in Calvert County, Maryland, is a destination for fossil treasure hunts. Cap the hunt with soft-serve at no-frills **Dairy Freeze** on the way back.

Go Camping

For a getaway that's an escape into nature, pitch a tent in campgrounds around the region. Journey along Skyline Drive to one of four camping areas in **Shenandoah National Park**. (Big Meadows, the most popular, requires a reservation.) Set up camp before exploring 500-plus miles of hiking trails with waterfalls and scenic vistas. Limited light pollution means gorgeous starry nights. **Assateague Island** has beachy shores for car or tent camping, plus you might see the wild horses that roam the sand. Prefer to glamp? **Cherry Hill Park**, just outside DC in College Park, has wooden pods that look rustic but don't require roughing it. (Think A/C, electricity, and wi-fi.)



Hunt for sharks' teeth at Flag Ponds.

Watch an Outdoor Movie

For an old-fashioned drive-in ripped from *Grease*, take your car to **Bengies** in Baltimore County, where the massive screen often shows double features. Snack-bar offerings include popcorn as well as retro treats like sno-balls and caramel apples. At **Wolf Trap**, the National Symphony Orchestra will perform live scores alongside upcoming screenings of *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* and *Back to the Future*. In DC, check off a night swim and outdoor movie in a single splash at **Hotel Zena's** weekly "Dive In Movies," where your seat for a screening can be a float or a pool chair.



Pair Wine With Flowers

Raise a glass of wine (or two) outdoors and toast summer blooms you can take home. An hour out of DC in Loudoun County, **Hope Flower Farm and Winery** has cut-your-own fields where you can gather seasonal blossoms such as zinnias and sunflowers, then enjoy a bottle of wine on the patio. Or, on weekends through August 15, take a wagon ride to **Great Country Farms** in Bluemont, Virginia, to pluck sunflowers. Neighboring winery **Bluemont Vineyard** brings a wagon into the fields to pour glasses of rosé while you walk through the stalks.

Enjoy an Over-the-Top Cold Treat

Top off a summer of cones with a decadent dessert. **Goodies Frozen Custard & Treats** in Alexandria puts classic custard between doughnuts, while waffles are the vehicle of choice for scoops and toppings at **Everyday Sundae** in Petworth. Can't decide on a flavor? **Sarah's Handmade Ice Cream** in Bethesda and Rockville offers ice-cream flights with six scoops, including such flavors as Thai iced tea, lavender honey, and coffee Oreo.



A multi-flavor flight at Sarah's Handmade Ice Cream



The US Botanic Garden has extended summer hours.



A midday concert at Woodrow Wilson Plaza

Stroll a Garden

More hours of daylight means more time to explore floral oases, with some gardens offering extended summer hours. At **Meadowlark Botanical Gardens** in Vienna, you can see end-of-season blooms including lotuses, coneflowers, and vibrant joe-pye weed until 7 PM, and pups get to tag along on Wednesdays. Meanwhile, the Conservatory at the **US Botanic Garden** (a cooler, indoor option) is open until 6 through the end of August for a post-work stroll. Once a month, an after-hours program stretches closing to 8, with botanical-themed mocktails and live music from the trio District Strings.

Sing at a Free Concert

Summer is the season for free outdoor music. Every weekday, take lunch to **Woodrow Wilson Plaza** in downtown DC and catch performances that cross genres. **The Wharf's** transit pier hosts R&B, rock, pop, and more every Wednesday. Fridays on the **Reston Metro Plaza** stage, cover bands and tribute groups belt throwback melodies from the Rolling Stones, Abba, Bruce Springsteen, and more. There are pop-up activities such as a photo booth and a silent dance party, too.

TOP PHOTOGRAPH BY LINDSEY MAX; MIDDLE COURTESY OF US BOTANIC GARDEN; BOTTOM BY JAMIE WINDON/TOMA FOR RRB/ITC



DINING GUIDE



Creekstone Farms Steak and Frites

Le Chat Noir

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WWW.LECHATNOIRRESTAURANT.COM



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Some desserts are always worth saving room for. Today, as it has been for generations, the World Class Carrot Cake at Truluck's is the iconic finale to an unforgettable meal. Enjoy layer upon layer of moist, spiced cake, silky cream cheese icing, and spiced pecans, topped with a warm butterscotch drizzle. It's a rich, elegant creation that's beloved by guests and befitting of the grandest occasions. Paired with a feast of the ocean's finest, it's the perfect way to end an extraordinary evening. Come indulge in a timeless Truluck's tradition that never ceases to amaze.

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Straight Talk

Five things I wish I'd known—or understood—about Invisalign before I started wearing the trays myself. Plus: the area's top orthodontists.

By Sherri Dalphonse

WHEN I WAS ABOUT 12, A DENTIST TOLD my parents I needed braces. My teeth were too crowded in my tiny mouth and crooked in spots. My parents, who afforded me a remarkable amount of autonomy, let me choose whether to get that mouthful of metal. You can guess what happened. Or, I should say, didn't.

Many years later, as my teeth continued to shift, I'd notice when someone else had a perfect smile. I grew a bit self-conscious about mine. My teeth didn't look so terrible that I refused to smile, but I did regret not getting braces.

Straighter teeth, I learned the hard way, weren't just nice to look at. As a few dentists had warned me in adulthood, crowded teeth were harder to clean between—that and my crossbite were causing gum recession. The crossbite also was putting pressure on some teeth. Last year, I cracked a bicuspid—and was told that could keep happening.

Which led me to orthodontist Jill Bruno's office in Friendship Heights, to get fitted with Invisalign trays that would gradually unsnarl my smile.

I had done my research, or so I thought,

about how my life would change during the 15 months or so I'd be wearing the removable plastic aligners. Still, there have been surprises, both pleasant and not.

After eight months so far with Invisalign, here's what I wish I'd known—or fully appreciated—before starting.

1. You might talk with a lisp, but others won't notice. That's not all they won't detect.

The appeal of Invisalign is in the name—the clear trays are meant to be invisible. I personally think they're obvious, but when I got together with a friend I hadn't seen since pre-Invisalign, she didn't notice the trays. She also didn't hear what I hear: a slight lisp. When you first sheath your teeth in plastic, you might lisp at the beginning. Although I've gotten used to the trays—I often forget I'm wearing them—I still perceive a faint slur when I open my mouth. My husband reassures me it's barely there.

"I do think what your husband said is true," says Bruno. "To your ear, it may sound different, but other people may not notice."

2. You'll think twice about snacking, or lingering over a cup of tea. And you'll brush and floss a lot. A lot.

I knew going in that I'd have to take out the trays to eat. It's nearly impossible to chew when they blunt the edges of the teeth. The one time I tried eating a grape with the trays in, I felt like I was gumming it.

But I didn't fully appreciate how inconvenient it would be to take them out to drink just about anything except water. Hot liquids can damage the trays; beverages like coffee can stain them.

Ideally, you're meant to wear them 22 hours a day. That's hard if you're taking the trays out not just to eat but also to drink.

I like to start many mornings sipping coffee or tea while playing Wordle and Spelling Bee, then have breakfast. That alone can eat up 90 minutes. Add in the time it takes for lunch and dinner plus any snacks, and I almost never hit 22 hours.

If my day includes an after-work cocktail reception, a dinner party, or any public speaking (where I worry about lisping), I'm lucky to wear the trays for 18 hours.

Then there's snacking. I began to weigh my hunger and cravings against the hassle of having a midafternoon cookie or handful of nuts, after which I'd have to brush. Dentists suggest that anyone brush and floss after eating; with Invisalign, you don't want residue trapped under the trays to cause decay. Occasionally, I decide a snack isn't worth it and just drink a glass of water. (On the plus side, I am drinking more water.)

Or I skip brushing after some snacks. I might leave my trays in while I sip an iced coffee or smoothie or white wine, especially if it's almost time to move on to the next set of trays to keep my teeth moving and I'll be tossing the ones I'm wearing.

"Once in a while, eating with them, drinking with them, it's not going to change your progress or cause harm," Bruno assured me. She also understands that 22 hours is tough, and told me to do my best.

"The best, most predictable wear pattern is 22 hours," she says. "I also tell my patients there is freedom in the framework. You can wear it periodically less than that and we can still get the result."

3. If your dentist offers at-home dental monitoring, do it—but be prepared for some frustration.

When I picked up my trays, I also got a

device called a ScanBox, which attaches to your smartphone and, with the help of an app, uses the camera to take images of your teeth that are then sent to the dentist.

"Most offices don't offer the dental monitoring," says Zach Casagrande, whose practice, Northern Virginia Orthodontics, also does. "Then you have to go to the office more often, which most people don't want to do."

ScanBox offers two settings—one, probably a hit with kids, is like a video game, in which you "capture" dots as you scan your mouth from side to side and up and down. It was fun, but it was glitchy and there were two dots—on the far right side of my mouth and on my top arch—that I had trouble "capturing," and the robotic voice kept urging me to "open wider" (remember: small mouth), until I wanted to fling my phone across the bathroom.

I eventually discovered a lower-key mode—no cartoon graphics—that's simpler for me to use. But that didn't end the frustration.

Hours after submitting a scan, I get a message from the dentist, generated with the help of AI. Two-thirds of the time, it's encouraging: "You are doing well—so well that it's time to move to your next set of aligners!" But a third of the time, the note is disappointing: "Sometimes teeth are stubborn, and aligners need a little more time. It's all good. Keep wearing this set." Usually, for me, that means another three days.

When I started Invisalign in late October, I was given 30 trays and told I'd move on every two weeks. I did the math: 60 weeks. Just over a year. I could do that. But because I've struggled to wear them for 22 hours, the first 15 trays have taken 34 weeks. The extra days add up. (While I change trays about every two weeks, some patients move on quicker.)

Forgoing my leisurely morning coffee could speed things along, but it's one of my daily pleasures. It's a choice.

4. You may not need the attachments on your teeth.

Another choice: I haven't had the attachments glued to my teeth. These are tiny bumps of composite resin that secure the trays and help push and pull teeth into a more predictable result.

During my initial visit, I found the trays painfully tight and had trouble prying them

off as well as snapping them in. (Each new set is snug when you first switch, but they loosen as teeth move.) When I was told the aligners would be even harder to get on and off once the attachments were affixed to almost a dozen of my teeth, I panicked.

Bruno told me that with adults she sometimes skips the attachments, at least at the beginning. Subsequent visits found my teeth moving nicely, so she said I still could do without. A colleague had told me that removing the attachments had damaged two of her teeth, so I was fine with not getting them—though I may need them later for stubborn teeth.

"Every patient is different, but there are ways to move teeth without attachments," Casagrande says. "We minimize attachments because I want my patients to have a great experience."

5. You'll probably hate the hassle. Until you start to see results.

The lisp. The inconvenience. Then there's the cost—I paid about \$6,000 for Invisalign, and that doesn't count the gum graft I needed before treatment could begin, or the bonding or veneers I'll need after to fill in a few gaps and hide the chips my bad bite created on the tips of some incisors.

Around tray 12, I was cleaning between my teeth with an interdental brush when I realized for the first time that I could slip the device between all of my lower front teeth. Before, they'd been so crowded, it never went through. I stopped and studied my teeth in the mirror. My husband had been insisting for weeks that they looked straighter, but I thought he was just being nice—how could they when I was only about a third of the way through? Dr. Bruno had said I'd really notice a difference around tray 20, but my teeth already looked straighter—an impression confirmed by a video on my phone app.

"It is hard as an adult to do this," Bruno says. "It's like watching paint dry. But for patients to be able to see the video and see the progress, it makes such a difference."

I'd reluctantly invested in Invisalign for the health of my teeth and gums—I tried not to get my hopes up about the aesthetics. But once I saw how much better my teeth were looking, I was all in. I even started being more disciplined about the hours I wore them. Halfway through, the whole process is already worth it.



TOP ORTHODONTISTS

This list of orthodontists, which first appeared in the March 2025 issue, was generated by sending a survey to every local dentist and asking them to rate their peers. The orthodontists below were judged to have the best skill, knowledge, results, and demeanor with patients.

Curtis L. Abigail
Arlington, Bethesda
571-388-3079

Ronald Ackerman
Waldorf
301-645-8222

Ibrahim Y. Alhussain
Vienna
703-952-7203

Rana Barakat
Sterling
703-433-9330

Elvi M. Barcoma
Ashburn,
McLean, Reston,
Gainesville
703-935-4837

Gregory D. Bath
Vienna, Great Falls
703-938-4614

Scott C. Berman
Falls Church,
Herndon
703-241-9191

Michael S. Blackwood
Northwest DC
202-333-2200

Ignacio Blasi Jr.
Lorton
571-556-1884

Atefeh Boroun
Rockville
301-424-0136

Jill Bruno
Chevy Chase
301-656-3310

Zachary Casagrande
Ashburn, Gainesville
703-935-4837

Ann-Colter Cheron
Centreville
703-818-8860

Robin Choi
Bethesda
240-233-6887

Katie Clark
Tenleytown
202-686-2108

William E. Crutchfield
Chantilly
703-263-0575

Lisa A. DeMarco
Silver Spring
301-593-6363

Garret Djeu
Fairfax
703-691-8388

D. Michael Ellis
Annandale, Burke,
Lorton, Fairfax
703-750-9393

Joseph S. Errera
Warrenton,
Middleburg,
Culpeper
540-347-1888

Frederick S. Fritz
Rockville
301-330-9550

Allen S. Garai
Vienna, Great Falls
703-281-4868

Eduardo J. Gerlein
Chevy Chase
301-951-4114

Ashkan Ghaffari
Vienna
703-281-0466

Ali Y. Ghatri
Fairfax, Herndon,
Reston
703-782-8704

Madeleine Goodman
Bethesda
301-867-7584

Alfred C. Griffin Jr.
Warrenton,
Middleburg,
Culpeper
540-347-1888

Thomas M. Grisius
Purcellville
540-338-8125

Gordon S. Groisser
Gaithersburg,
Clarksburg,
Hagerstown
240-252-5294

Linda A. Hallman
Chevy Chase
301-781-7745

Alan R. Heller
Bethesda, Laurel
301-654-5433

Roger A. Hennigh
Woodbridge, Burke
703-640-1000

Jean Hong
Silver Spring, Olney
301-236-0600

David R. Hughes
West Springfield
703-451-0502

Herbert M. Hughes
Alexandria
703-360-8660

Justin M. Hughes
Alexandria
703-360-8660

Navin Hukmani
Leesburg,
South Riding
703-858-3600

Darin B. Iverson
Arlington
703-536-7846

Timothy Johnson
Rockville
301-881-6170

Elizabeth M. Jones
Falls Church
703-573-0200

Mary A. Karau
Alexandria
703-765-5505

Christine M. Kim
Reston
703-939-8000

Rodney J. Klima
Burke
703-425-5125

Bob B. Kumra
Downtown DC,
Stafford
202-785-8672

Donald F. Larson
Alexandria
703-838-8998

Edwin Lee
Rockville, Olney
240-252-5293

William S. Lee
Alexandria
703-347-9876

Christopher G. Liang
Potomac,
Friendship Heights
301-983-3132

H. Quoc Lu
Alexandria
703-822-0010

Crissy Markova
Arlington
703-774-3070

Robert B. Marzban
McLean
703-686-8285

Deirdre J. Maull
McLean
703-556-9400

Lara D. Minahan
Olney
301-260-2030

Kelly E. Morgan
Leesburg,
Winchester
703-723-5900

S. Russell Mullen
Leesburg
703-771-9887

Chelsea Murphy
Friendship Heights
202-968-1144

Jina Naghdi
Herndon
703-471-8333

Denise T. Nguyen
Alexandria
571-427-4911

Dror Orbach
Downtown DC,
Falls Church
202-875-6407

David Rad
Potomac, College
Park, Bethesda,
North Bethesda
301-235-1125

Mehdy Rad
Potomac, College
Park, Bethesda,
North Bethesda
301-299-3993

Danielle E. Robb
Reston, Ashburn,
and Arlington
703-935-4837

Negaar Sagafi
Spring Valley,
Bethesda
202-644-9469

Viney P. Saini
Clarksburg,
Frederick
240-801-7464

Andrew L. Schwartz
Downtown DC,
Rockville
202-525-6952

Stuart A. Scott
Silver Spring,
Mitchellville
301-804-6687

John C. Shefferman
Downtown DC
202-338-7128

Debra Shin
Rockville, Potomac
301-770-7770

Richard Shin
Rockville, Potomac
301-770-7770

Dalia Shlash
Olney
301-924-2405

Patrice Smith
Downtown DC
202-223-2000

Christine Stang
Reston
571-548-3239

Sonia Talley
Tenleytown
202-686-2108

Hani Thariani
Arlington, Herndon
571-260-0122

Stephen P. Tigani
Tenleytown,
Poolesville,
Burtonsville
202-362-0072

Nancy C. Tilkin
Silver Spring
301-593-6363

Stephan Tisseront
Reston
571-458-1168

Chris E. Tsintolas
Gaithersburg
301-948-7513

Courtney J. Ullrich
Ashburn
703-278-3297

Robert Yu
Gaithersburg
301-948-7660



DENTAL PROFILES

FIND DENTAL CARE THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

Whether you need to schedule your regular check-up, an Invisalign® consultation, a teeth whitening session or anything in between, the following qualified area dentists are ready to serve your smile.

Selected photographs by
Shannon Ayres, Hilary Schwab,
and Michael Ventura



Dr. Samantha Siranli, DMD, PhD, FACP

SIRANLI DENTAL

The Face of Porcelain Veneers and Implants

Siranli Implants+Facial Aesthetics+Prosthodontics

Dr. Samantha Siranli is renowned for crafting stunning yet natural looking smiles for Washington, DC's elite. As a Diplomate of both the American Board of Prosthodontics and American Board of Oral Implantology, she holds the highest distinctions in the field.

Dr. Siranli believes that smile design starts with the face. Her unique approach begins by studying the patient's distinct facial structures, including cheekbones, lip support, smile line and teeth display. Dr. Siranli considers resting and full smiles and carefully listens to understand the patient's goals. Only then can she deliver the amazing results that built Siranli Dental's reputation.

Siranli Dental's in-house, state-of-the-art laboratory is also unique. Technicians craft veneers and crowns onsite, collaborating directly with doctors and patients to ensure the best aesthetic and functional results. When technicians see a patient's transformation firsthand it adds an extra level of passion and dedication.

What sets Dr. Siranli apart is a blend of precise technique, exceptional artistry and meticulous attention detail. In addition, Siranli Dental uses advanced technology such as computer-guided surgery, photogrammetry, and digital workflows to deliver extraordinary results.

Dr. Siranli's practice is also a Diamond Invisalign Provider, a distinction earned by her team's extensive experience and demonstrated ability to consistently achieve outstanding patient results. As one of the most popular Invisalign providers in the Washington, DC area, Siranli Dental ensures every treatment plan is personalized for precision, comfort, and efficiency.

SPECIALIZATION

Porcelain Veneers, Dental Implants, Prosthodontics, Smile Design, General Dentistry, Invisalign®

DESIGNATIONS, AFFILIATIONS, and AWARDS

- Mark of Excellence; Medical College of Georgia, Center of Esthetic and Implant Dentistry
- Exceptional Service, Dedication, and Contribution; Medical College of Georgia, Center of Esthetic and Implant Dentistry
- *Washingtonian* Top Dentists
- Diplomate, American Board of Prosthodontics
- Fellow, American College of Prosthodontists
- Diplomate, American Board of Oral Implantology

2112 F Street, #605, NW
Washington, DC 20037
202.466.4530

6707 Old Dominion Drive, #200
McLean, VA 22101
703.734.0100

1234 19th Street, #704, NW
Washington, DC 20036
202.296.3330

2550 S. Clark Street, #100A
Arlington, VA 22202
703.415.0505

siranlidental.com





Dr. Jill Bruno, DMD, MEd, FACD

DR. JILL J. BRUNO ORTHODONTICS

Q: What does your designation as a Diamond Plus Provider by Invisalign® mean for your patients or people looking to improve their smile?

A: This designation means that I am considered one of the top Invisalign® providers in the country, with expertise in treatment planning and correcting complex orthodontic issues, as well as minor tooth movement, with clear aligners.

Q: Are children and teens candidates for Invisalign® orthodontic treatment?

A: Yes. Our children and teen patients are very compliant with their aligners. Children as young as 8 or 9 years old can benefit from early Invisalign® treatment, especially for severe crowding, blocked teeth or spacing issues. Clear aligners and the removeable Invisalign® palatal expanders are a great option for children and teens who have a metal allergy or sensory issues.

Q: What is your educational background?

A: I graduated magna cum laude from Boston College with a bachelor's degree in economics. I received my Doctor of Dental Medicine and Master's Degree in Education from the University of Pennsylvania and my certificate in Orthodontics from the University of Rochester's Eastman Dental Center.

Q: Do you offer complimentary consultations?

A: Yes, we do! You can schedule here:



SPECIALIZATION

Orthodontics for children, teenagers & adults, Remote care specialist, thoughtful early treatment plans for children including those with sensory, dietary or speech issues, Diamond+ Top 1% Invisalign® provider

DESIGNATIONS, AFFILIATIONS, AND AWARDS

American Association of Orthodontists, American Dental Association, DC Dental Society, *Washingtonian* Top Dentist, *Bethesda Magazine* Top Dentist, Director of Butterflies for Change Nonprofit, Chair of the DC Dental Society Professional Standards Committee, Member of the DC Dental Society Public Policy Committee, Fellow of the American College of Dentists



5454 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 1260
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
301.656.3310
brunosmiles.com

Jeffrey L. Brown, DDS

SLEEP & TMJ THERAPY

What makes Sleep & TMJ Therapy so unique? They focus solely on TMJ/TMD, sleep apnea and finishing orthodontics. This allows Dr. Brown and his team to provide individualized care for patients dealing with these specific issues. Every day, the team helps patients of all ages with facial development, sleep issues, chronic headaches, migraines, neck pain, movement disorders, and much more. His training also includes multiple disciplines involving the cranial bones (skull), and the discs in the jaw joints. Through treatment, Dr. Brown can reduce these symptoms, align cranial bones, avoid extractions, and greatly reduce the need for traditional braces. His expertise allows him to identify issues early on which promotes proper facial development using dental appliances. If there is an internal imbalance, whether an adult or child, the body does not develop or function properly. When the cranial bones are lined up correctly, patients can function, sleep, and generally live better. There is a strong correlation when it comes to TMJ Dysfunction, Sleep Apnea, and sleep habits. That is why they try and identify the root of the problem instead of recommending medicine, night guards or irreversible procedures. With that in mind, the team at Sleep & TMJ Therapy uses a whole-body multidisciplinary approach when treatment planning. When needed they work with a team of doctors to identify problems outside the normal boundaries which provides solutions for complex cases.

Dr. Brown is a sought-after speaker outside of business hours. Since TMD is not really taught in dental school, his goal is to spread the word about treatment options so doctors worldwide can learn to help those in need. It is his goal is to catch underlying issues and guide growth to avoid problems later on. For more information, check out our website and Dr. Brown's blog!



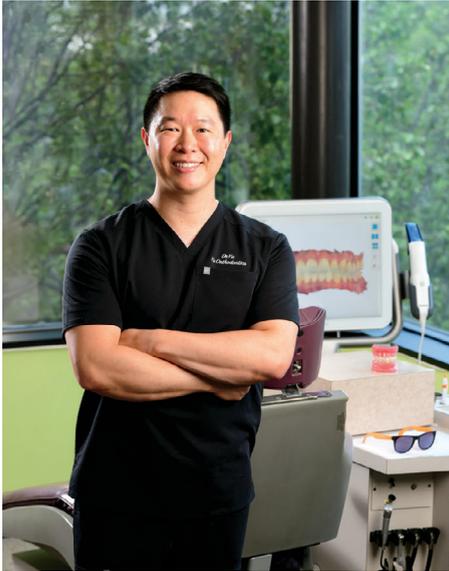
SPECIALIZATION

Conservative TMJ/TMD Therapy, Sleep Apnea Treatment, ALF Appliance Therapy, Migraine/Headache Treatment, Reducing Symptoms Associated with Movement Disorders, Extraction-Free Three-Dimensional Orthodontics, Cold Laser Massage Therapy, In-House TMD Massage Therapist, and Early Childhood Prevention

DESIGNATIONS, AFFILIATIONS, AND AWARDS

Dr. Brown graduated from Georgetown Dental School and completed residencies in Dental Sleep Medicine and ALF Appliance Therapy. He has been featured on Channel 9's *Good Morning Washington*, several podcasts, numerous magazines and journals. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Craniofacial Pain, Legacy Probioider of the ALF Interface Academy, a member of the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine and Academy of Integrative Pain Management, as well as many more organizations.

2841 Hartland Road, Suite 301, Falls Church, VA 22043
703.821.1103 | sleepandtmjtherapy.com



Robert Yu, DDS, MS

YU ORTHODONTICS

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Located in the North Potomac/Gaithersburg area, Yu Orthodontics combines cutting-edge technology with personalized care to transform smiles for kids, teens, and adults. Led by board-certified orthodontist Dr. Robert Yu, an artist as well as a clinician, the practice offers advanced treatment options like Invisalign®, Spark™ clear aligners, and self-ligating braces. Patients praise the warm, professional team and the comfortable, modern environment. Whether you are seeking a subtle enhancement or a full transformation, Yu Orthodontics delivers affordable expert care with an artistic touch. Book your free consultation today and discover why *Washingtonian* readers trust their smiles to Dr. Yu.

SPECIALIZATION

Invisalign®, Spark™ Aligners, Self-ligating Braces, Bite correction, Cosmetic tissue shaping, Child and Adolescent Growth and Development, Adult Orthodontics, Accelerated treatment times

AFFILIATIONS

American Dental Association; Maryland State Dental Association; American Association of Orthodontics; Diplomate of the American Board of Orthodontics; University of Maryland Alumni

814 W. Diamond Ave, Suite 300
Gaithersburg, MD 20878
301.948.7660

dryuorthodontics.com



Drs. Love & Miller, PC

FAMILY AND COSMETIC DENTISTRY

Drs. Love and Miller provide a family practice with special emphasis on healthy and beautiful smiles for adults and children. Both doctors graduated from the Medical College of Virginia and have been practicing together in Falls Church for over 25 years.

We take time to listen to our patients so that we truly understand their needs. With emphasis on overall health, we offer services including composite restorations, metal-free crowns, implant restorations, veneers and other cosmetic procedures. Our oral hygiene program excels at understanding the vital relationship between oral health and other systems in the body. Drs. Love and Miller, along with our amazing team, greatly appreciate the community's trust and support.

SPECIALIZATION

ADA, Virginia Dental Association, Northern Virginia Dental Association (Dr. Love is Past President), American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry

DESIGNATIONS and AWARDS

Washingtonian Best Dentists; Best Dentist of Falls Church 2013–2024; *Virginia Living Magazine* Top Dentists and *Northern Virginia Magazine* Best Dentist, 2016–2024; Best of Falls Church 2023; *Washingtonian* Hall of Fame; *Virginia Living* and *Northern Virginia*, 2024

450 W. Broad Street, Suite 440
Falls Church, VA 22046
703.241.2911 | loveandmiller.com



Jason A. Cohen, DDS

GENERAL, COSMETIC & IMPLANT DENTISTRY

What sets Dr. Jason A. Cohen's Dental Practice apart from others is that at his office they are committed to **Treating Your Family Like Family**. "We are very careful to treat your family like we would treat our own. We make sure everyone feels comfortable in our office." In addition to a comprehensive dental hygiene program and oral cancer screenings, Dr. Cohen also provides General Dentistry, Complex Prosthetics, including porcelain crowns and veneers, dental implant restorations and Invisalign®. "I have always been detail-oriented and maintained technical excellence within my practice. We are constantly taking courses to stay current on all the latest materials and techniques."

SPECIALIZATION

General, Restorative, Implant & Cosmetic Dentistry, Invisalign®

DESIGNATIONS, AFFILIATIONS, and AWARDS

Academy of General Dentistry, American Dental Association, MD State Dental Association, DC Dental Society and Southern MD Dental Society

5530 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 560
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
301.656.1201
cosmeticdds.com



Peter K. Cocolis, Jr, DMD

PETER K. COCOLIS, JR, DMD & ASSOCIATES

With 30 years of experience, Dr. Peter K. Cocolis, Jr. delivers comprehensive dental care in a warm and compassionate setting. His practice specializes in general, restorative, and cosmetic dentistry, with particular expertise in implant and sedation dentistry. Dr. Cocolis is committed to offering exceptional care, treating every patient with respect, courtesy, and compassion. A proud Springfield native, Dr. Cocolis is a Master of the Academy of General Dentistry, a Fellow of the Misch Implant Institute, and a Diplomate of the International Congress of Oral Implantologists. He is also dedicated to staying at the forefront of dental innovation through ongoing education.

DESIGNATIONS, AFFILIATIONS, and AWARDS

Education: Bachelor of Science, Chemistry: The College of William and Mary 1990;

Doctor of Dental Medicine: University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine 1994;

General Practice Residency: University of Virginia 1994-1996

5803 Rolling Road, Suite 211
Springfield, VA 22152
703.912.3800
smiles4va.com



Dr. Nancy Tilkin & Dr. Lisa DeMarco

Drs. DeMarco & Tilkin Orthodontics

LISA DEMARCO, DDS, MS AND NANCY TILKIN, DDS, MS

When it comes to orthodontics, dentists choose Drs. DeMarco and Tilkin to care for their family, friends and patients. Top graduates of the University of Maryland, these doctors specialize in facial esthetics to customize orthodontic treatment for children, teens and adults. They use the latest techniques including Invisalign, esthetic brackets, Surgical orthodontics and Myobrace.

For over 30 years, Drs. DeMarco and Tilkin have been consistently recognized as the finest orthodontists by *Washingtonian* and local consumer magazines. With their dedication to excellence and experienced caring staff, you will enjoy the ultimate orthodontic experience and "The Smile of a Lifetime."

SPECIALIZATION

Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics, Invisalign® Gold Plus Providers, Invisalign® Teen, Clear Braces, Jaw Surgery, Accelerated Orthodontics, Myofunctional Therapy, Children & Adults

DESIGNATIONS and AWARDS

Washingtonian's Top Dentist Hall of Fame; *Washingtonian* Top Dentists over 34 years, *Consumers' Checkbook* - Top Orthodontists, *Bethesda Magazine* - Best Orthodontists

11120 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20904
301.593.6363 | demarcotilkinortho.com



Lara Minahan, DDS, MS

MINAHAN ORTHODONTICS

This practice is truly grateful for all collaborations with esteemed peers and dear clients throughout the years.

Wishing for PEACE ACROSS THIS NATION and AROUND THE WORLD.

SPECIALIZATION

Orthodontics for Adults, Teens and Children

DESIGNATIONS

Delegate, American Association of Orthodontics

Past-Chairman of the Council on Orthodontic Practice, American Association of Orthodontists

Past-President, Maryland State Society of Orthodontists

3423 Olney-Laytonsville Road
Suite 3A
Olney, MD 20832
301.260.2030

MinahanOrthodontics.com





Dr. Marjun Ayati

FAIRFAX DENTAL GROUP

Dr. Marjun Ayati has been a general dentist local to the Washington metropolitan area for over 30 years. She attended the University of Maryland for undergraduate and Dental school. At her office, Fairfax Dental Group, patients are treated like family. She takes pride in having staff that has been with her for over 20 years, and her patients love seeing familiar faces every time they come to the dentist. The office is equipped with the latest technology such as 3D digital X-rays and iTero scanners to make your visit easy and comfortable. Her office offers comprehensive dental treatments such as dental implants, Invisalign®, Porcelain veneers, ceramic crowns, and bondings. Dr. Ayati is proud to be a woman-owned business serving the community.

SPECIALIZATION

Implant restorations; Invisalign®; cosmetic dentistry; smile design; whitening, night guards, snore guards & routine dental care; periodontal care; emergency treatment

DESIGNATIONS

ADA; Virginia Dental Association; Northern Virginia Dental Society; American Society of Implant & Reconstructive Dentistry; *Washingtonian* Top Dentists; BBB; *Consumers' Checkbook Magazine*; Virginia Top Dentist

8316 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 226
Fairfax, VA 22031 | 703.560.6301
fairfaxdentalgroup.com



Stephan Tisseront, DDS, PC

TISSERONT ORTHODONTICS

Looking for truly invisible orthodontic treatment? Dr. Stephan Tisseront has been a pioneer in cosmetic orthodontics for over 25 years. While he embraced Invisalign early in 1999, and uses it routinely, he understands it's not the best fit for every smile or every lifestyle. As the D.C. area's most trusted provider of lingual braces (behind the teeth), Dr. Tisseront offers a completely hidden alternative that delivers both precision and aesthetics. Recognized internationally as a leader in lingual orthodontics, he creates highly personalized plans for teens and adults alike. Whether you need minor alignment or complex orthodontic corrections, Dr. Tisseront's expertise ensures treatment is discreet and results are stunning.

SPECIALIZATION

Traditional and Ceramic Braces; Invisalign®; Lingual braces (behind-the-teeth); Complex and surgical orthodontic treatments

DESIGNATIONS, AFFILIATIONS, and AWARDS

Master of Science Degree in Orthodontics, Portland, Oregon; Founder, Elite Lingual Orthodontic Study Club; American Orthodontics Association; Southern Association of Orthodontists

11720 Plaza America Dr, #110
Reston, VA 20190
703.773.1200

tisserontorthodontics.com



Linda A. Hallman, DDS, PhD

FITBITE ORTHODONTICS

Meet the smile superstar of Chevy Chase, Dr. Linda Hallman. She is a true wiz at crafting healthy bites and dazzling smiles. You're the star of the show when you step into her office. She will give you personalized attention and care so that every treatment is as unique as you are.

Dr. Hallman has an impressive range of education and training. As Director of Orthodontics at MedStar Washington Hospital Center, Children's Hospital, and National Orofacial Institute, she's passing on her skills to the next generation of orthodontists. Her secret powers lie in tackling jaw problems that need specialist care, making her a true superhero in her field.

SPECIALIZATION

Complex malocclusions, Craniofacial Disorders, Jaw surgeries, Sleep Disorders, Braces, Clear Aligners, Invisalign, Children, teens, adults

AFFILIATIONS and AWARDS

MedStar Washington Hospital Center, Director of Orthodontics; Children's National Hospital; National Orofacial Institute, Co-Director; American Association of Orthodontists; Gillette Children's Hospital, Bethesda Big Train Baseball, Board Member

5530 Wisconsin Ave, Suite 1525
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
301.654.7910 | fitbiteortho.com



Harmony Pediatric Dentistry & Orthodontics

HEATHER SHOLANDER & MADELEINE GOODMAN

Dr. Heather Sholander, pediatric dentist, and Dr. Madeleine Goodman, orthodontist, have created a practice that focuses on collaborative care which involves looking at dental health as it relates to the whole body. This can include family education such as discussing lifestyle and behavioral habits, or recommending early orthodontic treatment to redirect growth. Harmony is an inclusive practice that tailors treatment to meet the needs and expectations of each family and creates a fun experience that has kids asking to come back! The practice offers comprehensive dental care for kids as well as orthodontics for both children and adults.

SPECIALIZATION

Board-certified Orthodontist
Board-certified Pediatric Dentist

DESIGNATIONS & AWARDS

Bethesda Magazine Best of Bethesda 2023, 2024; Pediatric Dentist (finalist), *Bethesda Magazine* Best of Bethesda 2022; Orthodontist (finalist), *Washington Parent Magazine* Top Pick (finalist); *Washingtonian* Top Dentist

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Bethesda, MD 20814
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for inclusion in a future **Dentist Profile** section.

Fed, Ex

Systems designed to protect federal employees are being dismantled. What happens next?

By Damare Baker

FEDERAL EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN LIV-ing in a constant state of uncertainty since late January, dealing with mass firings, court decisions that swing back and forth, and an administration that employment lawyers say is systematically dismantling longtime protections. In DC, where federal workers make up 43 percent of the workforce, thousands are scrambling to understand what comes next and turning to labor lawyers for guidance.

It's not just that jobs are disappearing—it's how they're disappearing that's left federal workers reeling. "Reductions in force (RIFs) have never been done this way before," says DC attorney Debra D'Agostino. Traditionally, Congress passes a budget that cuts funding for an agency or program, and then jobs are adjusted accordingly. Workers are transferred, retrained, or provided with proper notice and severance based on seniority and performance. "It was all done in a way that people knew what was happening, why it was happening, and could make informed decisions about their own situation," she says.

Instead, we're now seeing what D'Agostino calls "RIFs by executive order." The administration is bypassing careful documentation and procedural safeguards, resulting in employees getting fired without proper justification or having disability accommodations rescinded without review. "There were systems in place that everyone previously more or less respected, that were designed to prevent things like this from happening," says DC attorney Sarah Nason. "Now all of that is being ignored."

It's easy to understand why those affected may choose to accept their fate, but federal employees aren't powerless. Their employment rights remain largely intact, leaving many avenues to fight back—and lawyers are encouraging aggressive use of



Cuts to federal agencies have sparked protests in support of workers.

It's not just that jobs are disappearing—it's how they're disappearing.

these options. For instance, the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) continues to process cases despite Trump's firing of the Biden-appointed chair, Cathy Harris. "[Administrative judges] are hearing appeals on both probationary terminations and RIF cases," D'Agostino notes. However, the MSPB doesn't have a quorum of members, meaning cases won't reach final decisions for several months. But even if the MSPB becomes completely dysfunctional, DC attorney David Wachtel points out a recent Fourth Circuit decision in *National Association of Immigration Judges v. Owen* suggesting that federal employees may be

able to bypass it entirely and go straight to federal court.

The Office of Special Counsel and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) also offer paths for resolution, particularly for whistleblower or discrimination cases. Both D'Agostino and Wachtel admit that attorneys have limited faith in these forums, though, as they've become slower and less effective. Still, they advise people to file complaints.

For federal employees who haven't been laid off, Wachtel recommends starting documentation now. They should keep a detailed log of dates, events, and conversations but be strategic about what they record. "You can write outlines of the conversation, like 'On this date, I met this person and we talked about this subject,'" Wachtel says. He advises people to avoid including classified or sensitive information that could create additional problems. If you're in a union, it's also important to have a copy of your collective-bargaining agreement. Regularly check your electronic personnel records. Wachtel and Nason have seen RIF notices with incorrect employment dates that make workers appear to have less tenure than they actually do.



Most important, know your deadlines. Federal employees typically have 45 days after a discriminatory act to file an EEOC complaint. Don't wait for the perfect case, Wachtel says. Submit by the deadline and refine the complaint later. Once you've filed, be prepared to wait. Cases related to federal employment typically take several months to resolve. (Decisions are still being made on cases filed during Biden's presidency.) D'Agostino predicts it could be another year before

the Supreme Court decides on the legality of Trump's actions.

Though it may feel futile amid all the uncertainty, D'Agostino emphasizes that legal action serves a purpose beyond individual justice. Success may look like back pay or reinstatement for some, but for others it's about ensuring that the Trump administration follow the rules. For those who stay and fight, the message is clear: The systems designed to protect federal workers may be strained, but they're not broken.

TOP EMPLOYMENT LAWYERS

Federal workers are dealing with a lot of challenges under the Trump administration, including mass terminations and threats to civil-service protections. Although recent court rulings have blocked some workforce cuts, the legal landscape remains uncertain, making it more important than ever to consult attorneys who are experienced in employment law. While many of the following attorneys – who were selected through a peer survey as well as our own research – handle any type of work-related law, they have particular expertise in federal employment issues, from wrongful termination and discrimination to whistleblower protection and security-clearance disputes.

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National Security Counselors

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Selected photographs by Shannon Ayres,
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Alden Law Group PLLC's partners, Kristin Alden, Jim Eisenmann, and Michelle Bercovici – all of whom have been recognized as *Washingtonian* Top Lawyers – bring decades of successful employment and labor law experience, whether our clients need representation litigating disputes, advice negotiating employment contracts, or merely legal guidance understanding the complexities of their legal rights and obligations.

Alden Law is a boutique, nationally respected employment and labor law firm with an emphasis on representing federal government employees. Alden Law Group's three partners have over 80 years of experience in the complicated and nuanced field of federal sector employment law. It is the cornerstone of our practice. We represent federal employees in our nation's capital, nationally, and globally, as well as individuals, small business, and non-profits in the private sector in the DMV.

Our dedicated team advocates for our clients' rights in all types of workplace disputes. Our clients face whistleblowing reprisal, discrimination and harassment, unequal pay, denial of medical accommodations, investigations, misconduct / disciplinary matters, and government ethics issues. We provide creative, practical and impactful advice and representation. Alden Law focuses on clients as individuals, taking a holistic approach to find the best way forward.

AREAS OF PRACTICE

Federal government employees;
Employees – Plaintiffs; Labor Law;
Employers – Compliance and Guidance.

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Jill Stanley



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Founded in 1993, Cohen & Cohen is regularly identified as one of the top injury law firms in the Washington metropolitan region. Founder Wayne Cohen has been called by *Washingtonian* as one of the “most feared personal injury lawyers,” one of the top 50 lawyers in DC, and one of “Washington’s top trial lawyers.” Mr. Cohen is a past president of the Trial Lawyers Association of Washington, DC (TLA-DC) and an Associate Professorial Lecturer of Trial Skills at the George Washington University Law School. He has also been interviewed by the Today Show, Good Morning America, Dateline, CNN, MSNBC, ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, the *Washington Post*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *USA Today*, *Newsday*, and WTOP radio. Partner Adam Leighton is also a past-president of the TLA-DC. In 2024, Mr. Leighton resolved a bus accident case on behalf of his injured client for \$7,000,000. Partner Kim Brooks-Rodney has spent 30 years litigating personal injury cases. Ms. Brooks-Rodney represented victims of the 2009 Metro crash in Washington, DC, as well as the 2015 Metro incident where the trains filled with smoke. She obtained a \$5,134,000 verdict in a medical malpractice case in Virginia. Founding partner Jill Stanley began her career as an Assistant District Attorney, and a reporter for America’s Most Wanted. The firm represents catastrophically injured victims throughout the DMV.

AREAS OF PRACTICE

Auto/Motorcycle/Truck Accidents, Wrongful Death, Medical Mistakes, Product Defects, Work Injuries, Serious Personal Injury Matters

DESIGNATIONS, AFFILIATIONS, and AWARDS

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Elaine L. Fitch, Managing Partner at Kalijarvi, Chuzi, Newman & Fitch (KCNF) and a fierce advocate for civil rights in the workplace, has dedicated her almost 30-year career to fighting for both federal and private sector employees facing discrimination and retaliation, unlawful discipline and termination, failures to accommodate, security clearance issues, and reductions in force. Consistently recognized as one of Washington, D.C.’s top employment attorneys, Elaine’s leadership and unwavering dedication safeguard employee rights and advance equality, reinforcing KCNf’s 50-year legacy as a champion for workplace justice.

AREAS OF PRACTICE

Employment Law: Employee Discrimination, Harassment & Retaliation; Security Clearance Law

DESIGNATIONS, AFFILIATIONS, and AWARDS

Fellow of the College of Labor and Employment Lawyers; Member of The Fellows of the American Bar Foundation

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Left to right: Juliana Lord, Abigail Young, Katherine Atkinson, Lisa Sandoval, Bekah Bass, and Kayla Bemis

Atkinson Law Group, LLC

A BOUTIQUE EMPLOYMENT LAW FIRM

When your livelihood is on the line, we are by your side. Attorneys at Atkinson Law Group deliver results for workers across all industries. Our clients are executives engaged in severance negotiations and public and private sector employees who have experienced discrimination, civil service violations, whistleblower retaliation, discipline, termination, or harassment. ALG also advises clients regarding their rights to reasonable accommodation and can guide employees in navigating their employers' processes to obtain the workplace adjustments they require.

ALG congratulates Katherine Atkinson for being honored as one of the *Washingtonian's* Top Employment Attorneys for 2025. Ms. Atkinson has nearly two decades of experience litigating and negotiating on behalf of employees. ALG attorneys prioritize the highest quality representation, collaborative decision-making with clients, and fierce advocacy for a just workplace.

AREAS OF PRACTICE

Employment – Discrimination, Harassment, Retaliation, Whistleblower Protection, Civil Service Protection, Reasonable Accommodation, Severance Negotiation

DESIGNATIONS and AWARDS

Washingtonian 2025 Top Employment Lawyer, Federal Employment Law Training Group Instructor, Metropolitan Washington Employment Lawyers members, National Employment Lawyers Association members

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Berry & Berry is located in Reston and has been providing exceptional employment law services to federal employees nationwide and private and public sector employees in VA, D.C., and MD for over 25 years. Led by founding partner John V. Berry and managing partner Kimberly H. Berry, the firm's attorneys routinely appear in hearings, mediations, and other proceedings before various federal agencies and legal forums largely involving administrative actions, security clearances, administrative investigations, discrimination, federal retirement, employment and separation agreements, and grievances. Mr. Berry primarily handles security clearance defense, disciplinary action defense, administrative investigation representation, and representation in equal employment opportunity discrimination matters. Mr. Berry is an expert in his field, serving as General Counsel to the U.S. Park Police Fraternal Order of Police labor union and formerly serving the U.S. Capitol Police Fraternal Order of Police labor union. He is regularly interviewed and appears on major networks, such as CNN, and is often quoted by leading news organizations, such as the *Washington Post* and *Associated Press*. He regularly teaches continuing legal education courses and writes several published legal articles on various topics regarding employment and labor law as well as security clearance law, including for ClearanceJobs.com.

AFFILIATIONS and AWARDS

Top Attorneys: *Arlington, Northern Virginia, and Washingtonian* Magazines; Advisor/Faculty: D.C. and VA Bar CLEs, major news outlets/publications, companies, nonprofits, and labor unions; Former Editor-in-Chief/Member: D.C. Bar Labor and Employment Law Newsletter and Steering Committee; Member: MWELA, VELA, and Security Clearance Lawyers Association

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Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Retaliation, Discrimination, Severance Negotiations, Whistleblower, Title IX

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15 REAL WEDDINGS

RUNWAY REPORT
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Restaurant weddings
Getting-ready fashion
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PHOTOGRAPH AT
ANDERSON HOUSE BY ANNEMARIE DEALE

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301.725.6037

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INDOOR SEATED: 200

PATIO: 200

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Prince George's Ballroom

INDOOR SEATED: 200

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Newton White Mansion



INDOOR SEATED: 210

PATIO SEATED: 210

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Oxon Hill Manor

All Dolled Up

From feathered slips to satin sets, these getting-ready outfits will have you feeling picture-perfect even before the wedding bells chime

BY JACQUELINE TYNES



A LITTLE EXTRA
Feathers and pearls—brides who love glam have plenty of flirty choices.

1. “All Nighter” satin-and-feathers sleep dress, \$118 at shoprevelry.com.
2. Mucci Simona pearl-embellished mini chemise, \$278 at anthropologie.com.



LACY LOOKS
The delicate detailing adds a romantic touch.

1. Homebodii “Valentina” lace cami-and-shorts set, \$129, and short-sleeve robe, \$159, at anthropologie.com.
2. “Ruelle” lace-trim bridal playsuit, \$105 at shoplerose.com.



COZY, CUTE, AND CASUAL
These pieces add panache to a laid-back style.

1. “Wifey” statement sweatshirt, \$60, and sweatpants, \$50, at sixstories.com.
2. “Accolade” crew-neck pullover, \$128 (available in 20 colors, ideal for wedding parties), and pants, \$128, at aloyoga.com.



CHIC SETS
More brides are opting for sets that match their ‘maids.

1. “Makeup Tank,” \$54 (available in 12 colors/prints), and “Glam Time Shorts,” \$44, at showmeyourmumu.com.
2. “Sutton” satin cami set, \$50 (available in six colors), at birdygrey.com.



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Eat, Drink, Be Married

For some couples, booking their wedding at a favorite local restaurant fits the bill

BY ANDREA POE

This couple chose bright, sunset-inspired flowers to contrast with the black-and-white decor at Maketto for their New Year's Eve affair.



Romantic yet practical, hosting a wedding in a restaurant is an increasingly popular idea. Often, couples consider restaurants over more traditional venues for sentimental reasons: It's where they first met, or their table for two on date night. For others, it's the intimacy of the dining room that suits their style. In some cases, it's the hope that a one-stop shop will peel away layers of stress from wedding planning. Before you book your most important reservation yet, here are some things to consider.

1.

THE MENU

Restaurants that host weddings are pros at delivering food and service, so you can count on high quality. A big plus is selecting options you know and love, though many places will customize the food for a private event. At nautical-chic Ruse in Maryland's Talbot County, for example, couples craft menus directly with a James Beard Award-nominated chef.

2.

THE OUT-OF-THE-BOX SETTING

"Most of my clients that get married in restaurants want something that feels a little unexpected," says planner Sara Bauleke of Bella Notte. "Restaurants have the benefit of great food and an established vibe, and tend to encourage a bit different flow from a traditional wedding." At Maketto in Northeast DC, for instance, the display wall designed for sneakers is part of the unique, customizable backdrop, and at Baby Shank, a French restaurant with a lush rooftop, couples can exchange vows overlooking the buzzy U Street corridor. An advantage of entertaining in a restaurant is that personalized decor, including dance floors, bars, draping, elaborate table settings, and more can be kept to a minimum. A restaurant wedding typically is less about transformational design than it is about sharing a beloved place with guests, and couples rarely go for the kind of custom build-outs, showstopping installations, and oversize centerpieces that are common for ballroom, museum, warehouse, and tent weddings.

3.

THE WIDE-RANGING COSTS

In Washington, where wedding budgets of \$75,000 to \$125,000—and up—are common, restaurant events can be on the less expensive side, particularly if you choose to lean into the venue's aesthetic, using the onsite furniture, silverware, linens, and so on. At Ruse, a restaurant buyout requires a minimum of \$18,500 in food and drinks, plus taxes and service fees. At the Cooper Mill on Alexandria's

PHOTOGRAPH BY JUDSON RAPPAPORT

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Runway Report

Fresh from the spring 2026 bridal collections, the season's most popular dress trends—from halter tops to hip-forward silhouettes—bring new energy to bygone styles. (We're loving the refreshed '90s vibes.)

BY AMY MOELLER

Pronovias



Basque, Draped, and Drop Waists

Katherine Tash



Ines Di Santo

Mark Ingram



Galia Lahav



Esé Azénabor

Alyssa Kristin



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF DESIGN HOUSES

Asymmetrical Necklines



Katherine Tash

Pronovias

Halter Tops



Eva Lendel

Ines Di Santo

Scarves



Nadia Manjarrez

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Mira Zwillinger



Alyssa Kristin



Milla Nova



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Katherine Tash



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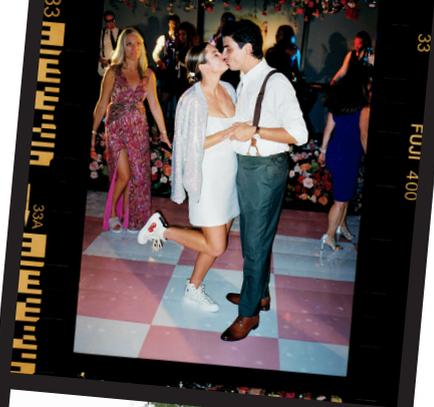
Oh, Snap

Local photographer Kir Tuben reflects on how this wedding gallery— which also includes classic portraits and timeless shots—incorporated fun poses and creative techniques to let one couple’s personality shine



“This wedding was unique in that I had shot two of the bride’s best friends’ weddings, so I had gotten to know the couple. Niki and Tony are the life of every party, so a big reason these photos are so fun is because they are so fun. But I also talked to Niki a lot about the art direction before the day and they were down for any idea I pitched. We talked about everything from the dance floor to the backdrop and the funky [expired] film. I’m also buds with the wedding planner [Sam of Marriage and Mimosas], so it felt really collaborative. The energy is all them, though. I had the same amount of portrait time I have for any other couple on a wedding day, but they were really willing to get weird and trust me. In a nutshell, our weirdness perfectly overlapped and we had a bunch of fun! Definitely one of my favorite [weddings] of all time.” —AS TOLD TO AMY MOELLER

See more from this wedding at washingtonian.com/weddings.



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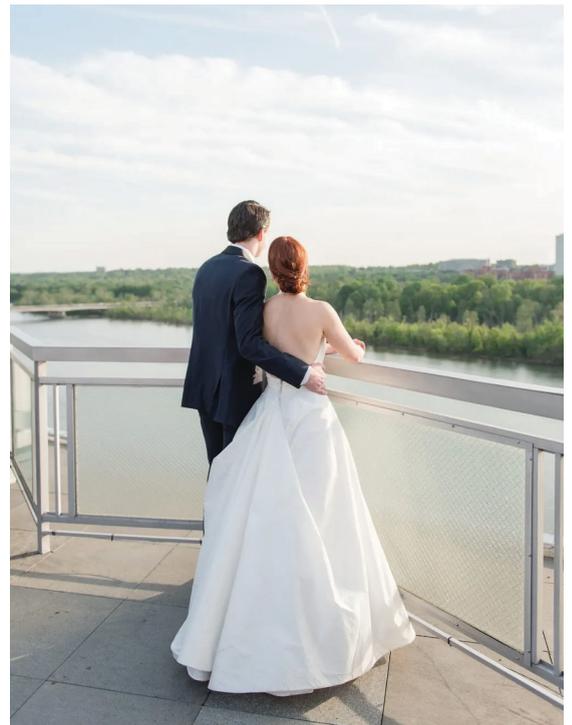


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REAL WEDDINGS

These local celebrations feature elements and designs to inspire

BY AMY MOELLER



5.04.24

Deneen & Justin

Heigh Torr Estate
Purcellville

Photographs by Alicia Wiley
Photography

TWO I.T. PROFESSIONALS FROM MARYLAND, Deneen and Justin met as engineering students at the University of Pittsburgh but really connected later at a friend's wedding. Three years after their first date, Justin gathered more than 30 loved ones in a flower-and-photo-filled room to surprise Deneen—who was visiting the venue under the guise of scouting it for another party—with a proposal.

Their colorful wedding featured a “Let love grow” theme bursting with flowers—a mix of real and faux—and nods to

Star Wars. Even the rain, they say, only enhanced the vibrant aesthetic, carried out with a mint-green suit for Justin and guests encouraged to wear pink. Deneen DIY'd some of the special details, including the seating chart as well as the floral chandeliers, which she and her aunt spent two weeks building out of PVC pipe and chicken wire. Jamaican dishes at dinner were a hit, but the warm butternut-squash bisque was the star of the culinary show—perfect for the unpredictably cold, windy, and wet early-May weather.



THE DETAILS

Planning, design:
Infatuating Affairs

Florist:
SBL Events

Stationery: Canva

Caterer:
Manny Eats

Desserts:
Angela Johnson of
Cupcake Couture

Hair: L. Aivi by
Stylist Kat C.

Makeup: Hellooo
Gorgeous

Bride's attire:
Marchesa from
Love Couture Bridal

Groom's attire:
Bushelers of
Baltimore

Music: Bryan
Thompson
(saxophone);
DJ Footloose

Rentals: Select
Event Group

Lighting: John
D. Alexander
Lighting Design

Videographer:
Angela Lauren Co.

Bar service:
Garden Party
Cocktail Catering





THE DETAILS

Planning, design:
Little Acorn
Events Co.

Florist: Tupelo
Floral Company

Invitations:
Lil City Design Co.

Caterer: C&O
Restaurant

Cake: Cake Bloom

Hairstylist:
Posh Bride

Makeup artist:
Elizabeth Wilson

Bride's attire:
Kelly Faetanini
from the Bridal
Room

Groom's attire:
Bonobos

Music: Keynote
from Sam Hill
Entertainment

Rentals:
MS Events

Transportation:
Cville Hop On
Tours



9.7.24

Alison & Joseph

Merrie Mill Farm & Vineyard
Keswick, Va.

Photographs by Meredith Coe
Photography

THOUGH THEY GRADUATED TOGETHER from the University of Virginia, Alison and Joe met two years later through friends. They hit it off with playful banter, and three years after that, Joe proposed at DC's Tregaron Conservancy. They celebrated with brunch at their first-date spot, Screw-top, and a staycation at the Willard.

For their late-summer wedding, the pair created a "whimsical elegance" theme in bubble-gum-pink, blue, and sunset hues. Among the details were the escort wall, which Alison and her dad made with magnets chosen for each guest,

along with notes explaining their significance; light-up pompoms at the exit, a nod to Alison's cheerleading days; catering by a restaurant that Joe's parents have frequented for decades; and a wine-and-food pairing designed by the bride and groom. Alison's favorite moment was their first dance to "Bennie and the Jets"—a song Joe learned to play on the piano early in their relationship. Highlights for him were relaxing on the terrace before the ceremony with their parents and the wedding party and, at the reception, an appearance by the UVA Cavman mascot.

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3.29.25 and 3.30.25

Joanna & Stephen

Culture House

Anderson House
Washington, DC

Photographs by Annemarie Deale

JOANNA, AN ATTORNEY FROM NIGERIA by way of Texas, and Stephen, an engineer from Arkansas, were teammates on their college track team. Joanna thought he was kind of a goofy guy; Stephen saw her as quiet, mysterious, and way cooler than him. By senior year, though, something clicked. They dated for eight years while Joanna finished graduate school, then law school. Eventually, Stephen proposed in the National Mall's Mary Livingston Ripley Garden.

Their fashion-forward two-day wedding began with a vibrant Nigerian celebration decorated in shades of pink,

orange, and red, followed by an American wedding with green-and-white decor that Joanna describes as romantic and timeless. Their weekend wardrobes, they say, were a highlight. Stephen wore a custom jacket and then a semi-bespoke tuxedo from a fifth-generation Savile Row tailor. Joanna had five looks: On Saturday, a short isi agu dress, then a long, embellished green George-lace gown. On Sunday, she walked the aisle in a chic ballgown, danced in a sparkly gown with a detachable skirt, and waved goodbye in a short, pearl-embellished dress for the newlyweds' chic bicycle getaway.



THE DETAILS

Planning, design:
Sensational
Signature Events

Florist:
Bloomin' Wild

Caterer, rentals:
Kingsway
(Saturday); Main
Event Caterers
(Sunday)

Hair: Nava Noam

Makeup: Vals
Makeup Artistry

Bride's attire:
Ave (isi agu); Amy
Aghomi (Saturday
reception); Amsale
(Sunday ceremony);
Eva Lendel (Sunday
reception); Rebecca
Tembo (getaway)

Groom's attire:
Koch House
(Saturday jacket);
Steed Bespoke
Tailors (tuxedo)

Bridesmaids' attire: Custom
(Saturday); Bella
Bridesmaids
(Sunday)

Groomsmen's attire: Spier &
Mackay; Suitsupply

Music: Chief Uche
(emcee); DJ EJ

Videographer:
Moving Hearts

Bikes: Morrow
Hotel

Bartender:
Diva Events

something vintage

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THE DETAILS

Planning, design:
Bailey Weddings

Florals: Blue
Vanda Designs

Paper: Colorfully
Ciera (invitations);
MLC Designs
(signage);
Ruby the Fox
(stationery)

Caterer: The
Classic Catering
People

Cake, dessert:
Blue Crab
Cupcakes

Hair, makeup:
Georgetown
Bride; True Color
Beauty

Bride's attire:
Essence of
Australia
from Amanda
Ritchey Bridal
Loft; Untamed
Petals (reception);
Betsey Johnson
(sneakers)

Groom's attire:
Men's Wearhouse

Music: Spectrum

Rentals: White
Glove Rentals;
Something
Vintage; Select
Events; EventPro;
Loane Bros.

Transportation:
Driven

Videographer:
Film & Flourish

Photo booth:
Mirrored Image
Photo Booth

6.29.24

Taylor & Brandon

Whitehall
Annapolis

Photographs by Lisa Blume

TAYLOR SAYS SHE KNEW INSTANTLY that she'd met her future husband when she and Brandon connected over spicy pickleback shots at a last-minute get-together with mutual friends. Eighteen months later, Brandon proposed on the beach in Ocean City.

A hot-pink-and-orange color scheme and a maximalist display of bold flowers; colorful linens and signage; disco balls; and extra sparkle carried out their "sassy Southern disco" wedding theme. Each bridesmaid held a unique, single-variety

bouquet, and blooms from each were combined to create Taylor's arrangement. Jell-O shots that greeted friends and family set a playful tone, and cheeky signs at the reception's food stations ("You're the Mac to My Cheese," "Well, Butter My Biscuit!") spelled out more fun. The Southern-inspired menu offered barbecue, burgers, hot dogs, a fry bar, and pimiento cheese. Dreamland sauces nodded to Taylor's Alabama college days. Another memorable touch: a custom-built pergola over the dance floor.

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8.24.24

Lotanna & Jerry

Washington National Cathedral

The Fairmont
Washington, DC

Photographs by IVASH Studio

LOTANNA, AN ANESTHESIOLOGIST from Rockville, and Jerry, a cardiologist from Washington state, were matched up by his brother's wife. Eighteen months later, Jerry's proposal became a family affair while the pair were vacationing with loved ones in Mexico.

Their "regal romance" wedding began with nuptials at the grand National Cathedral, followed by a reception at the Fairmont, which was transformed with flowers and decor in shades of ivory, champagne, and gold—including wall-to-wall white carpeting brought in for the occasion. Guests entered the

hotel ballroom through a hallway lined with life-size photos from the couple's engagement-portrait session—Jerry's favorite element of the day. Overhead at the reception, a cascading ceiling installation was Lotanna's favorite detail. An escort wall displaying 280 personalized favors—handheld fans, a signature accessory of the couple—read **OUR BIGGEST FANS**. Once seated, guests were served a four-course dinner with Nigerian influences. In addition to celebrating with a welcome party, the newlyweds hosted loved ones the day after the wedding for an afternoon-tea bus tour of DC.



THE DETAILS

Planning, design:
MasterPlan Events

Florals, decor:
Design House
Decor

Lighting, draping:
The LightSource
Company

Invitations:
By Dami Studios

Caterer: Fairmont
Washington, D.C.;
Chops by Rera

Makeup: JDaye
Artistry (bride);
E.Marie Glamour;
Makeup by Pngang
(bridesmaids)

Hair: Dolled
by NuEye

Attire: Alonuko
(bride); Billionaire
New York (groom)

Entertainment:
District Strings;
MC Chaz; DJ
TeeCee

Rentals: Nuage
Designs; Table
Manners; Select
Event Group;
Dalissa Events &
Party Rentals; Rues
Design

Carpet:
Two Brothers
Installations

Transportation:
My Sugar Exotics

Videographer:
Bricks Group
Media

THE DETAILS

Planning, design, florals: Farm & Fields

Paper: Dogwood Hill (invitations); The Dandelion Patch (day-of)

Caterer: Heirloom Catering & Event Design

Cake: Mihaela Priester

Hair, makeup: Caitlyn Meyer

Bride's attire: Savin London from Nouvelle Vogue (California)

Groom's attire: Indochino

Groomsmen's attire: Jos. A. Bank

Music: Two Rivers Chamber Music (string quartet); Chris Laich from Washington Talent (DJ)

Rentals: DC Rental; Stradley Davidson; Nuage Designs; Something Vintage; Maison de Carine

Transportation: Reston Limousine

Videographer: Paperboys

Chandeliers: Lighting Inc.

Dance floor: DJ Max Powers

Tent: Sugarplum Tent Company



8.24.24

Samantha & Dylan

Private residence
The Plains

Photographs by Monica Mendoza for
Hana Gonzalez Photography

EIGHT YEARS AFTER SAMANTHA, A research scientist, and Dylan, an environmental geologist, met as college students in Colorado. Dylan proposed following a meal of oysters and white wine in California. At their “English country garden” wedding in Virginia, the mutual friend who introduced them officiated.

The summer affair—inspired by the hand-painted gown Samantha chose before planning any other details—featured a pale-pink-and-light-green color scheme. The bride designed a toile motif to reflect

the couple, and the invitation suggested a colorful, floral dress code. At cocktail hour in the courtyard of the barn, the menu included carrots for the horses and signature cocktails for the guests—spicy ranch water, served in Topo Chico bottles, and blueberry mojitos. Inside the reception tent—where the couple skipped the flooring (“The grass was lovely”) and hung chandeliers and string lights—the newlyweds’ parents projected a surprise montage of photos of Samantha and Dylan through the years.



THE DETAILS

Planning, design:
 Havard Events
 & Design

Florals: Christ
 Church Flower
 Guild (ceremony);
 Sophie Felts Floral
 Design (reception)

Invitations:
 Empress Stationery

Caterer: The
 Hay-Adams

Cake: Liberty
 Baking Co.

Tiramisu:
 Bisnonna Bakeshop

Hair, makeup:
 MAB Artistry

Brent's attire:
 Ralph Lauren
 Purple Label
 (tuxedo); La
 Bowtique (bow tie);
 Paul Stuart (shoes)

Andrew's attire:
 Todd Snyder
 (dinner jacket
 and tuxedo pants);
 Eton (shirt and
 bow tie); Bruno
 Magli (shoes)

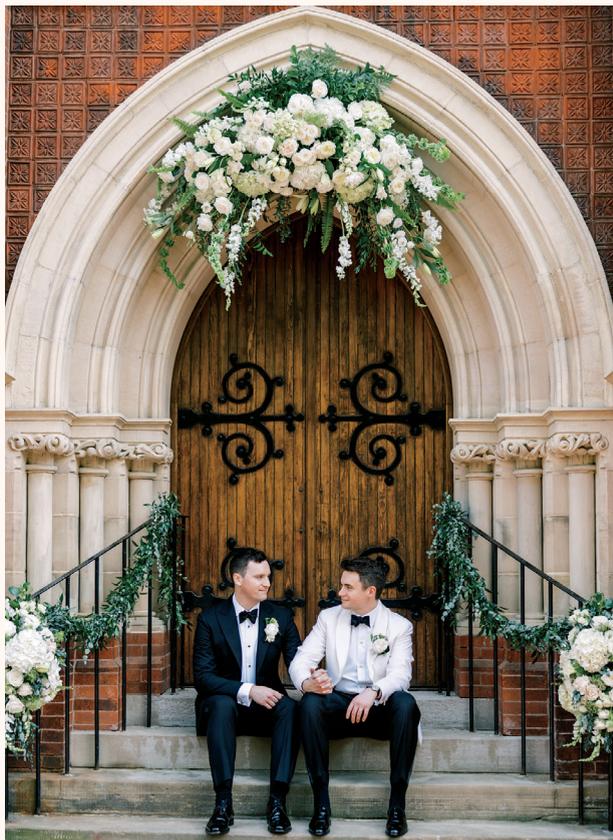
**Wedding-party
 attire:** Azazie;
 assorted tuxedos

Music: Onyx from
 Washington Talent

Rentals: Select
 Event Group;
 DC Rentals;
 BBJ La Tavola

Transportation:
 Sunny's Worldwide

Seating chart:
 Honest Events



5.3.25

Brent & Andrew

Christ Church Georgetown

The Hay-Adams
 Washington, DC

Photographs by Jennie Raff
 Photography

ATTORNEYS BRENT AND ANDREW MET in South Bend, Indiana, while Brent was clerking for a federal judge and Andrew was studying law at Notre Dame. Three years after their first date at a local Irish pub, they got engaged on campus.

The pair describe their May wedding—decorated in greens, navy, shades of white, and gold—as “traditional, masculine, formal, and joyful.” Hydrangeas in the floral arrangements gestured to Brent’s grandmother, whose summer yard, he recalls, always burst with the

blooms. The invitations and a plaid escort display featured a custom emblem that combined their initials. Tableside pours of Billecart-Salmon Champagne were another special touch. In addition to an almond wedding cake with vanilla buttercream icing, guests were offered tiramisu as a second dessert. Two of Andrew’s favorite memories: entering the ceremony with Brent to Gustav Holst’s “Thaxted” playing on the organ, and ending the reception with the folksy rhythms of “Wagon Wheel.”

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9.7.24

Vriti & Jeremiah

National Arboretum
Washington, DC

Photographs by Kate Melconian

VRITI AND JEREMIAH STARTED DATING after they met working on Elizabeth Warren's 2020 presidential campaign. Four years later, they got engaged on a trip to the Scottish Highlands.

They wanted to honor Vriti's South Asian roots while hosting a wedding that felt uniquely them. Vriti spent a long time, she says, working with an officiant to design a ceremony that honored Hindu tradition yet abbreviated the nuptials and made them easy to follow. An outdoor setting was nonnegotiable, reflecting

their love of nature and hiking. Decor in shades of green with pops of orange, red, and purple evoked a Hindu palette and complemented the National Arboretum's beauty. Rather than assigning seats, the couple mixed high-tops, lounge areas, and open round tables to encourage mingling and give the reception a modern, festive atmosphere. In lieu of signature cocktails, the bar was stocked with top-shelf Scotch, and instead of a cake, servers passed ice-cream sandwiches on the dance floor.



THE DETAILS

Planning, design, invitations:

Glorious Weddings & Events

Florist: Far Bungalow Farm

Caterer: Purple Onion Catering; Rangoli Restaurant

Hairstylist: Artistry of Jameise

Makeup artist: Styling by Camille

Bride's attire: Falguni Shane Peacock from Studio East6 (Chicago)

Groom's attire: Anita Dongre (jacket); Suitsupply (pants); Vintage India (shoes); Krewe (sunglasses)

Music: DJ Roel from ShiVish Entertainment

Rentals: Pretty Little Wedding Co.; Select Event Group; Sammy's Rental; Tierra Events

Henna artist: Shazia Jalil

Welcome-party venue: Hill Prince

Tent: Select Event Group

Dance lessons: Yours Truly Dance

Officiant: Priya Amaresh from Duke University

THE DETAILS

Planning, design:
B Astonished
Events

Florals: Ivie Joy
Floral Arts

Invitations: Minted

Caterer:
The Conrad

Cake: Liberty
Baking Co.

Hairstylist:
Dommie Cole

Makeup artist:
Tia Codrington

Bride's attire:
Designer Loft
Bridal; Ese Azenabor
(reception)

Groom's attire:
Alan David Custom

Bridesmaids' attire:
Jenny Yoo

**Groomsmen's
attire:** The Black Tux

Entertainment:
The DocMC
(emcee); DJ
EarthKwak

Rentals: Luxe
Event Rentals;
Table Manners;
Something Vintage;
DC Rental; Sweet
Gifts

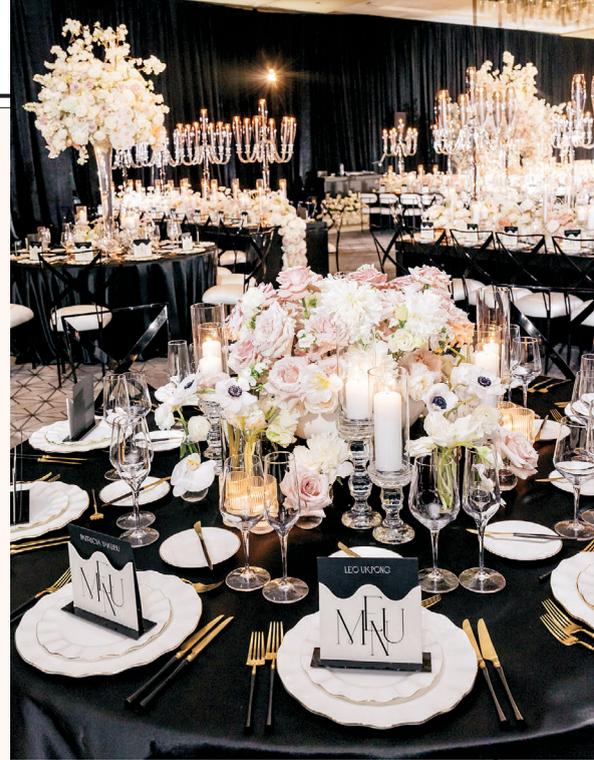
Production:
Fabrication Events;
The LightSource
Company

Stationery:
By Dami Studios

Videographer:
Unleashed Vizuals

Content creation:
Content by Camille

Photo booth:
Pixl Dash



5.17.25

Didi & Dennis

The Conrad
Washington, DC

Photographs by Stanlo Photography

THREE AND A HALF YEARS AFTER EdidingAbasi, an anesthesiologist from Pennsylvania, and Okechukwu, a dentist from Mississippi, met at a networking happy hour at HalfSmoke in DC, they got engaged while on vacation in Positano, Italy.

For their black-tie affair, Didi and Dennis envisioned a classic and timeless aesthetic with a black/white/blush-pink/nude palette. Flowers draped the baby grand piano that provided the ceremony

soundtrack—which included praise-and-worship music—and the couple exchanged vows amid mostly white florals and decor, for a bright, airy feel. The contrasting design for the reception—predominantly black elements inspired by the hotel ballroom's chandeliers, along with white florals and candlelight—created what their planner called a “luxe, moody atmosphere” where the newlyweds celebrated with loved ones.

9.14.24

Katie & Corey

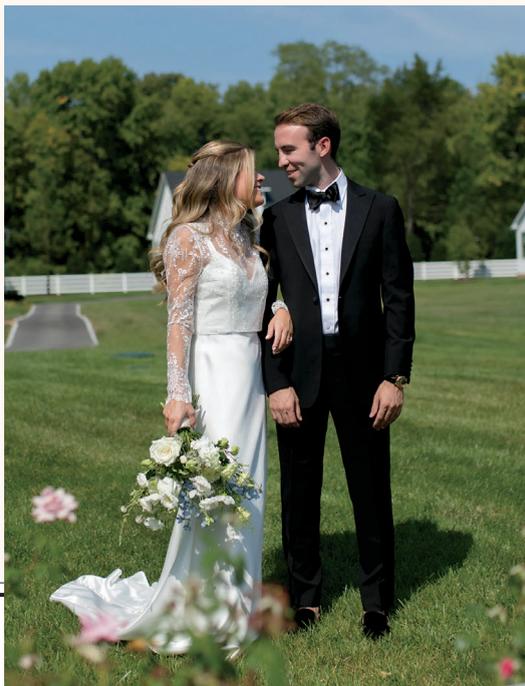
The Oaks
Easton, Md.

Photographs by Kimberly F. Denn

AFTER A MUTUAL FRIEND SET THEM up, Katie and Corey hit it off at a wine bar in New York's West Village. Two years later, Corey proposed on a trip to Katie's family's house in Bethany Beach.

Their wedding weekend was designed to offer guests seamless logistics and flowing food and drinks, from the family-style dinner at Ruse in St. Michaels on Friday to the late-night pizza and Capriotti's subs at the casino-themed after-party on Saturday—complete with a blackjack table and dealer. The pattern-filled “coastal

whimsy” vibe included mini lamps that Katie's bridesmaids painted and custom icons that appeared on the escort wall and playing-card favors. Other special details: the ribbon from Katie's mother's wedding dress that tied the bride's bouquet; passed High Noons at cocktail hour; and rattan baskets suspended over the dance floor, spilling flowers and greenery. For their minimoon, the newlyweds toured inns near the Blue Ridge Mountains, with stays at Primland, Keswick, and the Inn at Little Washington.



THE DETAILS

Planning, design:
Lauren Corrigan
Events

Florist: Steelcut
Flower Co.

Invitations:
Stephanie Gould
Calligraphy and
Design

Cake: All in the Mix
Bakeshop

Hair, makeup:
Amie Decker Beauty

Bride's attire:
Elizabeth
Fillmore Atelier

Groom's attire:
Martin Greenfield
Clothiers

Bridesmaids' attire: V. Chapman;
Aqua; L'idée; Jenny
Yoo; Reformation

Music: Pop Culture
Strings from Kush-
ner Entertainment;
the Source from
Washington Talent

Rentals: Pretty
Little Wedding Co.;
Stradley Davidson;
BBJ La Tavola

Transportation:
Extraordinary Luxury
Transportation

Videographer:
Paul Kwak

Tent: Eastern Shore
Tents & Events

Restrooms:
Lux Lavs

Casino: U.S. Casino
Event Planners

THE DETAILS

Planning, design: A. Dominick Events

Florist: Sophie Felts Floral Design

Invitations, day-of paper: Cheree Berry Paper & Design

Caterer, cake: The Four Seasons

Hair, makeup: MAB Hair and Makeup Artistry

Bride's attire: Sarah Seven from Lovely Bride

Groom's attire: Hugo Boss; Geoffrey Lewis

Music: Élan Artists (saxophone at dinner); DJ Will Gralley

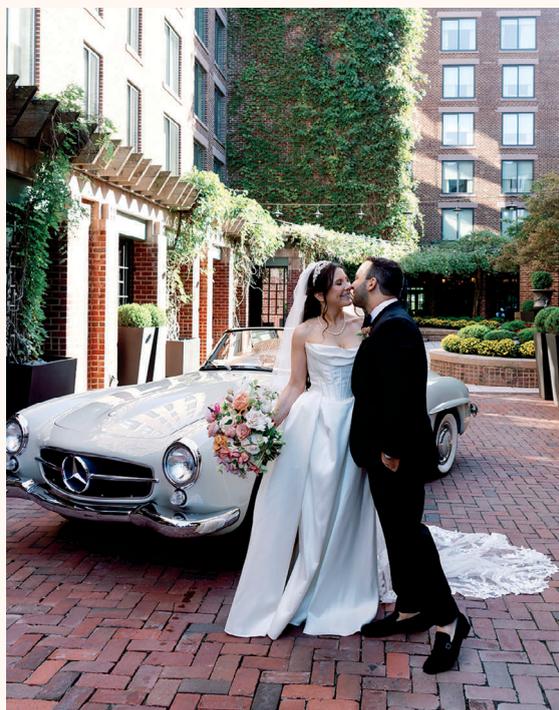
Rentals: DC Rental; Maison de Carine; White Glove Rentals; BBJ La Tavola

Videographer: Monachetti

Drape: Fabrication Events

Lighting: Frost Lighting

Custom bar: Grofik Installations



10.5.24

Eleanor & Benito

The Four Seasons
Washington, DC

Photographs by Liz Fogarty
Photography

TWO AND A HALF YEARS AFTER A FIRST date at a wine bar, lawyers Eleanor and Benito got engaged in the atrium of the University of Baltimore law school—where they'd spent so much time together and which Benito filled with orchids, Eleanor's favorite.

Their "dreamy, extravagant, enchanting" wedding began with a procession through an indoor forest of trees lining the ceremony aisles. The affair was decorated in blush, and a wedding emblem—a redesign of Eleanor's family crest—appeared on the invitations, place

cards, and more. Guests received traditional Italian bomboniere favors filled with Jordan almonds as an homage to Eleanor's grandmother, and the drink menus honored the bride and groom: For Eleanor, guests started with an Aperol spritz and capped the night with limoncello; for Benito, they began with a Negroni and ended with an amaro—for both, red wine in between. Late-night cacio e pepe was presented inside a Parmesan wheel. "It was so decadent," says Eleanor, "but it was the talk of the wedding!"



THE DETAILS

Planning, design:

SG3 Events

Florals: Sweet Root Village

Cake: Fluffy Thoughts Cakes

Stationery: Minted; By Dami Studios

Hairstylist: Hair By Kware; TressArt by Serena

Makeup: Beauty 'N the Bride

Bride's attire:

Martina Liana from Elegance by Roya

Groom's attire:

Alton Lane

Music: Josanne Francis (steel pan); DJ Trini

Rentals: Stradley Davidson; Nuage Designs; Select Event Group

Lighting, stage, draping, dance floor: The Light-Source Company

Videographer: Sok Vision

Officiant: Ceremonies by Shelby

Audio guest book: The Other Line

Content creator: In the Moment

Augmented-reality experience: ImmersLabs

5.25.25

Terrianne & Ryan

The Royal Sonesta, Capitol Hill
Washington, DC

Photographs by Terri Baskin

A MATCHMAKING SERVICE INTRODUCED Terrianne, an IT executive from Trinidad and Tobago, and Ryan, a construction executive from Napa, California. The connection was deep and heartfelt, they say, and a swift nine months later, they got engaged on a Delaware beach.

The intimate celebration blended Parisian elegance with coastal tranquility, layered in shades of blue—Ryan's favorite color and a reflection of Terrianne's love of the ocean. A sand ceremony that symbolized the blending of their families was Terrianne's favorite moment; seeing

their six kids dressed as bridesmaids and groomsmen "in a symbol of unity" was Ryan's. Steel-pan music at the ceremony and cocktail hour honored Terrianne's dad's memory, and blue and white florals—plus greenery evoking seagrass—combined with velvet place cards, patterned linens, woven candle holders, rattan signage, and frayed-edge cloth menus for a sea of texture. Dinner, a French-inspired meal that included steak au poivre, was followed by a showstopping four-tier wedding cake layered with red velvet, passionfruit, and chocolate.

9.14.24

Nada & Beau

Holy Rosary Church
Washington, DC

Private residence
Arlington

Photographs by Laura Foote
Photography

WHEN NADA FIRST MET BEAU, SHE says she could tell he was the life of the party, but also remembers thinking: “That guy is a lot.” Beau was determined to meet Nada from the moment he spotted her. Fast-forward a year and a half and he arranged for her parents and siblings to fly across the country to celebrate with them over dinner—after he proposed on a walk through Spokane’s Riverfront Park in Washington state.

Put together in just six months, their late-summer wedding was designed to feel like a night in Italy (Nada’s family owns the Italian Store gourmet shops in Arlington) and featured a yellow-

and-green color scheme. A green Vespa and a blue three-wheeled Apé car, a few rustic touches, plus lemons and lemon trees galore helped set the scene. A cheese expert made fresh mozzarella during cocktail hour; dinner was all-Italian, from the antipasto platters and meatballs to pastas and the bride’s family’s pesto. A gelato cart, vanilla cake, and homemade Italian and Croatian cookies completed the menu. Beau says every guest from Spokane clapped and sang along when the goal song from his family’s hockey team out west started to play, and the T-shirt toss on the dance floor was another rowdy hit.

THE DETAILS

Planning, design:
Anne Kelley Events
& Design

Florist: Open
Blooms

Invitations: The
Dandelion Patch

Caterer, cake:
Design Cuisine

Beauty: Hair
& Makeup Artistry
by Claudine

Attire: Justin Alexander from Ellie’s Bridal Boutique; Men’s Wearhouse; Abercrombie & Fitch (bridesmaids)

Music: Justin Paschalides (accordion); Cherry Blossom String Quartet; DJ B. Rock

Rentals: White Glove Rentals; DC Rental; Plants Alive

Transportation:
Sunny’s Worldwide

Videographer:
Windsor Films

Tent, lighting, drape, flooring:
Sugarplum Tent

Calligraphy, seating display:
Annie Lloyd Lettering & Design

Gelato cart:
Dolci Gelati

Mozzarella:
Sal Salzarulo



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Carine's Bridal Atelier

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Lovely Bride

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lovelybride.com

Sareh Nouri

Chevy Chase
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sarehnouri.com

Soliloquy Bridal Couture

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571-449-2580
soliloquybridal.com

Tang's Bridal

703-393-8458
tangsalterations.com

TLC Bridal Boutique

Frederick
301-662-8874
tlcboutique.com

Zoya's Atelier

Falls Church
703-533-9600
zoyasatelier.com

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bakedandwired.com

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bluecrabcupcakes.com

Blue Lace Cakes

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bluelacecakes.com

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Tysons
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Couture Cakes by Sabrina

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cakesbysabrina.com

Fluffy Thoughts Cakes

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703-942-5538
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fluffythoughts.com

Jenny Baked It

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jennybakedit.com

Jisoo Cake Design

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jisooakedesign.com

Liberty Baking Co.

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libertybaking.com

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bakestudio
millstreamfarm.net

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signaturesweetsb-yamanda.com

Sugar Rex

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sugarrex.com

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sweetsbye.com

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blackgarlicevents.com

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bollywoodbistrocaterers.com

Corcoran Caterers

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corcorancaterers.com

Design Cuisine

703-979-9400
designcuisine.com

Get Plated

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getplateddc.com

Heirloom Catering & Event Design

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heirloomdc.com

IndAroma

703-354-1812
indaroma.com

Main Event Caterers

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maineventcaterers.com

Occasions Caterers

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occasionscaterers.com

Oysters XO

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oystersxo.com

Purple Onion Catering Company

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purpleonioncatering.com

Relish Catering

301-366-0823
relishcateringdc.com

Ridgewells Catering

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ridgewells.com

RSVP Catering

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rsvpccatering.com

Simply Fresh Events

240-685-2500
simplyfreshevents.com

Spilled Milk Catering

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spilledmilkcatering.com

Susan Gage Caterers

301-839-6900
susangage.com

Well Dunn Catering

202-543-7878
welldunn.com

Windows Catering

703-519-3500
catering.com

Content Creation

In the Moment

@inthemomentconten-tcreators

Social Spark by Betsy

@socialsparkbybetsy

Entertainment Services (NON-MUSICAL)

Artstella Productions

Live entertainment
301-300-1016
artstellaproductions.com

Booth-o-Rama

Photo booths
301-587-3700
booth-o-rama.com

By Brittany Branson

Live-event painting
@bybrittanybranson
bybrittanybranson.com

Cocktail Curations

Cocktail bars
@cocktailcurations
cocktailcurations.com

Cortez Cigars

Cigar rolling
@cortezcigars
cortezcigarsdc.com

Elena Fay

Live-event painting
@elenafay_art
elenafay.com

Lucy Black Entertainment

Live entertainment
lucyblackentertainment.com

Molecular Food & Cocktails

Interactive cocktail experiences
@molecularfoodcocktails
molecularfoodcocktails.com

Skylark Creative Group

Entertainment management group
@skylarkcreativegrp
scgentertainment.net

Snap Entertainment

Photo booths and games
240-386-8042
snapentertainment.net

Spencer Grace Art

Live painting
@spencergraceartspace
spencergraceartspace.com

Event Planners and Designers

A. Dominick Events

@adominickevents
adominick.com

A. Griffin Events

@agriffinevents
agriffinevents.com

Angelica & Co. Events and Styling

@angelicacoweddings
angelicaandco.com

Anne Book Event Design

@annebook_
annebook.com

Anne Kelley Events & Design

@annekellydc
annekelleyevents.com

Anyvent Event Planning

@anyvent_eventplanning
anyventeventplanning.com

Arney Walker Studios

@arneywalker
arneywalker.com

B Astonished Events

@bastonishedevents
bastonishedevents.com

Bella Notte

@bellanottedc
bellanottedc.com

Bellwether Events

@bellwetherevent
bellwetherevents.com

Birch Event & Design

@birchmanagement
bircheventdc.com

Brielle Davis Events

@brielledavisevents
brielledavisevents.com

Bright Occasions

@margobrightoccasions
brightoccasions.com

C'est Belle

@cest.belle.events
cestbelleevents.com

CG and Co Events

@cgandcoevents
cgandcoevents.com

Chandon Jones Design

@chandonjonesdesign
chandonjonesdesign.com

Cheers Darling Events

@cheersdarling_events
cheersdarlingevents.com

Cherry Blossom Events

@cherryblosseventsdc
cherryblossomwe.com

Cristina Calvert Weddings

@cristinacalvertweddings
cristinacalvert.com

Dantus & Co. Events

@dantusandcoevents
dantusandco.com

Elizabeth Duncan Events

@eduncanevents
elizabethduncanevents.com

Etc. Coordinators

Coordination only
@etccoordinators
etc-coordinators.com

Events by André Wells

@eventsandrewells
eventsbyandrewells.com

Evermore Occasions

@evermoreoccasions
evermoreoccasions.com

Evoke Design & Creative

@evoke_dc
evokedc.com

Favored by Yodit Events & Design

@favoredbyyodit
favoredbyyodit.com

Grit & Grace

@gritandgraceinc
gritandgraceinc.com

Havard Events & Design

@havardevents
havardevents.com

Howerton + Wooten Events

@howertonwooten
hwevents.com

Ida Rose Events & Design

@idaroseevents
idarose.com

Jayne Heir Weddings

@jayneheir
jayneheir.com

Jessica Ashley Events

@jessicaashleyevents
jessicaashleyevents.com

Kari Rider Events

@kaririderevents
karirider.com

K Bella Events

@kbellaevents
kbellaevents.com

Kelley Cannon Events

@kelleycannonevents
kelleycannonevents.com

Kim Newton Weddings

@kimnewtonweddings
kimnewtonweddings.com

Lauren Corrigan Events

@laurencorriganevents
laurencevents.com

Lauryn Prattes Styling and Events

@laurynprattes
laurynprattes.com

MasterPlan Events

@masterplanevents
amasterplanevent.com

Michele Hodges Events

@michelehodgesevents
michelehodgesevents.com

Pamela Barefoot Events & Design

@pamelabarefoot_events
pamelabarefoot.com

Pineapple Productions

@pineappleprod
pineapplepro.com

Rex & Regina Events

@rexandregina
rexandregina.com

Roberts & Co. Events

@robertsandco
robertsandcoevents.com

Sarah Kazenburg Events & Styling

@sarahkazenburgevents
skbevents.com

Sara Muchnick Events

@smevents
smeventsdc.com

SG3 Events

@sg3events
sg3events.com

Signature Concepts

@signatureconceptsllc
signatureconceptsllc.com

Silk + Slate Co.

@silksandslateco
silksandslate.com

Simply Breathe Events

@simplybreathevents
simplybreathevents.com

SRS Events

@srs_events
srs.events

Terry Kaye Events

@terrykayeevents
terrykayeevents.com

Vieira Events

@vieiraevents
vieiraevents.com

Wildflower Hill Co.

@wildflowerhill.co
wildflowerhill.co

Favors, Gifts, and Welcome Boxes

Marigold & Grey

@marigoldgrey
marigoldgrey.com

Florists

Amaryllis

@amaryllisinc
amaryllisdesigns.com

Ash to Oak Floristry

@ash_to_oak
ashtoOak.com

B Floral Event Design

@bfloraldc_
bfloraleventdesign.com

Blue Vanda Designs

@bluevandadesigns
bluevandadesigns.com

Cedar and Lime Co.

@cedarandlimeco
cedarandlimeco.com

Darling and Daughters

@darlinganddaughters
darlinganddaughter-
sfloral.com

Edge Floral Event Designers

@edgefloraleventdesigners
edgeflowers.com

Eight Tree Street Floral

@eighttreestreetfloral
eighttreestreet.com

Elegance & Simplicity

@eleganceandsimplicityinc
eleganceandsimplicity.com

Floral & Bloom

@floralandbloom
floralandbloom.com

Flor de Casa

@flordecasa_designs
flordecasadesigns.com

Floret & Vine

@floretandvine
floretandvine.com

Flowers at 38 by Philippa Tarrant

@flowersat38
flowersat38.com

Holly Heider Chapple Flowers

@hollychapple
hollychappleflowers.com

House of Jeanne Flowers

@houseofjeanneflowers
houseofjeanneflowers.com

Kate Campbell Floral

@katecampbellfloral
katecampbellfloral.com

Lisa Lee Florals

@lisaleeflorals
lisaleeflorals.com

Love Blooms Floral Design

@lovebloomsdc
lovebloomshare.com

Nature of Design

@natureofdesign
natureofdesignus.com

Petals and Promises

@petalsandpromises
petalsandpromises.net

Petals by the Shore

@petalsbytheshore
petalsbytheshore.com

Petal's Edge Floral Design

@petalsedge
petalsedge.com

Rocking Bird Flower Co.

@rockingbirdflowerco
rockingbirdflower.com

The Rosy Posy

@therosyposy
therosyposy.com

Sarah Khan Event Styling

@sarahkhaneventstyling
sarahkhaneventstyling.com

She Loves Me

@shelovesmedc
shelovesme.com

Sherwood Florist Weddings & Events

@sherwood.florist
sherwoodflorist4u.com

Sidra Forman

@sidraforman
sidraforman.com

Sophie Felts Floral Design

@sophiefelts
sophiefelts.com

Springvale

@springvalefloral
springvalefloral.com

Steelcut Flower Co.

@steelcutflowerco
steelcutflowerco.com

Stem & Thistle

@stemandthistle
stemandthistlefloral.com

Sweet Root Village

@sweetrootvillage
sweetrootvillage.com

Tang Austin Floral

@tangaustinfloral
tangaustinfloral.com

Toulies en Fleur

@touliesenfleur
toulies.com

Victoria Clausen Floral Events

@victoriaclausenflorals
victoriaclausen.com

Wander + Whimsy

@wanderandwhimsyfloral
wanderandwhimsyfloral.com

White Magnolia Designs

@whitemagnoliadesigns
whitemagnoliadesigns.com

Gown Alterations

Anytime Alterations

Kensington
301-933-0288
anytimealterations.com

BeFitted Tailoring Co.

Alexandria
befittedtailoringco.com

Green & Blue Studio

202-223-6644
greenandbluedcwed-
dings.com

Ms. Lee Alterations

Georgetown
202-337-2162

Parkway Custom Drycleaning

North Bethesda
301-281-6589
parkwaydrycleaning.com

Tang's Alterations

Manassas
703-393-8458
tangsalterations.com

Hairstylists and Makeup Artists

Amie Decker Beauty

@amiedeckerbeauty
amiedeckerbeauty.com

Beauty 'n the Bride

@beautyinthebrowpmu
beautyinthebride.com

Blush Away

@blushawaymakeup
blushaway.com

Blush by Makki

@blushbymakki
blushbymakki.com

Bridal by Sarah Khan Artistry

@bridalbysarahkhanartistry
bridalbysarahkhanartistry.com

Caitlyn Meyer Hair & Makeup

@caitlynmeyerpro
caitlynmeyer.com

Carla Pressley Hair and Makeup

@carlapressleyhairmakeup
carlapressley.com

Carl Ray Makeup Artist

@carlraymua
carlraymakeupartist.com

Glam Qui

@glam_qui
glamqui.squarespace.com

Hair & Makeup Artistry by Claudine

@hairandmakeupby-claudine
claudinefay.com

Hair by Remona

@hairbyremona
hairbyremona.com

JKW Beauty

@jkwbeauty
jkwbeauty.com

Olivia Lo

@olivialomakeup
olivialomakeup.com

MAB Artistry

@mab.artistry
makeupbyanab.com

Makeup by Kevan

@makeupbykevan
makeupbykevan.com

Makeup by Mimi Tran

@mimibtran
makeupbymimitran.com

Makeup by Pnang

@makeupby_pnang
makeupbypnang.com

Makeup by Shirin

@makeupbyshirin_
makeupbyshirin.com

Megan Monahan

@hairandmakeupbymegsmon
megsmon.com

Carola Myers

@carolamyers
carolamyers.com

Nour Kazoun Makeup Artist

@nour.kazoun.artistry
nourkazoun.com

Priscilla M Beauty

@priscillambeauty
priscillambeauty.com

Red Carpet Ready Makeup With Shauné Hayes

@redcarpetreadymakeup
redcarpetreadymakeup.com

TressArt by Serena

@tressartbyserena
tressarhair.com

Hotels and Venues

Anderson House

CAPACITY: 130; indoor and outdoor
2118 Massachusetts Ave., NW
202-785-2040
societyofthecincinnati.org

Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium

CAPACITY: 600; indoor with balcony
1301 Constitution Ave., NW
202-373-8183
mellonauditorium.com

Autoshop at Union Market

CAPACITY: 150; indoor with terrace
416 Morse St., NE
unionmarketdc.com

Birkby House

CAPACITY: 180; indoor and outdoor
109 Loudoun St., SW
Leesburg
birkbyhouse.com

Chesapeake Bay Beach Club

CAPACITY: 310; indoor, outdoor, and waterfront
500 Marina Club Rd., Stevensville, Md.
410-604-1933
baybeachclub.com

Conrad Washington DC

CAPACITY: 500; indoor, outdoor, and rooftop
950 New York Ave., NW
202-844-5900
conradwashingtondc.com

Culture House

CAPACITY: 250; indoor and outdoor
700 Delaware Ave., SW
202-844-6225
culturehousedc.org

DAR

CAPACITY: 150; indoor and outdoor
1776 D St., NW
202-628-1776
dar.org

Decatur House

CAPACITY: 150; indoor and outdoor
1610 H St., NW
202-218-4333
whitehousehistory.org/
decatur-house

District Winery

CAPACITY: 200; indoor
385 Water St., SE
202-484-9210
districtwinery.com

Dockmaster Building at the Wharf

CAPACITY: 100; indoor and outdoor
101 District Sq., SW
wharfdc.com/event-space

Fairmont Washington, D.C.

CAPACITY: 440; indoor and outdoor
2401 M St., NW
202-429-2400
fairmont.com/washington

Fathom Gallery 14th Street

CAPACITY: 72; indoor, outdoor, and rooftop
1333 14th St., NW
202-588-8111
fathomgallery.org

Fleetwood Farm Winery

CAPACITY: 200; indoor and outdoor
23075 Evergreen Mills Rd., Leesburg
703-722-2124
fleetwoodfarmwinery.com

Four Seasons

CAPACITY: 420; indoor and outdoor
2800 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
202-342-0444
fourseasons.com/washington

Glenstone Gardens

CAPACITY: 300; indoor and outdoor
8 E. Washington St., Middleburg
540-687-9764
glenstonegardens.com

Goodstone Inn & Restaurant

CAPACITY: 300; indoor and outdoor
36205 Snake Hill Rd., Middleburg
540-687-3333
goodstone.com

Hay-Adams

CAPACITY: 250; indoor with balcony
800 16th St., NW
202-638-6600
hayadams.com

Inn at Perry Cabin

CAPACITY: 250; indoor, outdoor, and waterfront
308 Watkins Ln., St. Michaels
410-745-2200
innatperrycabin.com

InterContinental Washington D.C.—The Wharf

CAPACITY: 400; indoor
801 Wharf St., SW
202-800-0844
wharfintercontinentaldc.com

International Spy Museum

CAPACITY: 160; indoor and rooftop
700 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
202-393-7798
spymuseum.org

Kogod Courtyard at the National Portrait Gallery

CAPACITY: 850; indoor
8th and G sts., NW
202-633-8111
npg.si.edu/visit/kog-odcourtyard

The Line DC

CAPACITY: 500+; indoor and outdoor
1770 Euclid St., NW
202-588-0525
thelinehotel.com/dc

Long View Gallery

CAPACITY: 200; indoor
1234 Ninth St., NW
202-630-3122
longviewgallerydc.com

The Mayflower

CAPACITY: 900; indoor
1127 Connecticut Ave., NW
202-347-3000
themayflowerhotel.com

Meridian House

CAPACITY: 150; indoor and outdoor
1630 Crescent Pl., NW
202-939-5894
meridian.org

The Middleburg Barn at Fox Chase Farm

CAPACITY: 350; indoor and outdoor
23320 Foxchase Farm Ln., Middleburg
540-687-5255
themiddleburgbarn.com

National Museum of Women in the Arts

CAPACITY: 450; indoor
1250 New York Ave., NW
202-783-5000
nmwa.org

Patterson Mansion

CAPACITY: 150; indoor
15 Dupont Circle, NW
pattersonmansion.com

Pendry Washington DC—The Wharf

CAPACITY: 200; indoor
655 Water St., SW
202-843-1111
pendry.com/washington-dc

Perry Belmont House

CAPACITY: 150; indoor
1618 New Hampshire Ave., NW
202-667-4737
ihbelmontevents.com

Potomac View Terrace at the American Pharmacists Association

CAPACITY: 250; indoor, outdoor, and rooftop
2215 Constitution Ave., NW
202-429-7547
potomacviewterrace.com

Renwick Gallery

CAPACITY: 270; indoor
Pennsylvania Avenue at 17th St., NW
202-633-7970
americanart.si.edu

Riggs Washington DC

CAPACITY: 120; indoor and rooftop
900 F St., NW
202-638-1800
riggsdc.com

River Farm at the American Horticultural Society

CAPACITY: 240; indoor and outdoor
7931 E. Boulevard Dr., Alexandria
703-768-5700
ahsgardening.org

Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center

CAPACITY: 2,000; indoor and outdoor
1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
202-759-0074
rrbitc.com

St. Regis Washington D.C.

CAPACITY: 200; indoor and outdoor
923 16th St., NW
202-638-2626
stregiswashingtondc.com

Shadow Creek

CAPACITY: 300; indoor and outdoor
18090 Silcott Springs Rd., Purcellville
540-454-8115
weddingsatshado-wcreek.com

The Showroom

CAPACITY: 280; indoor
1099 14th St., NW
202-844-6222
theshowroomdc.com

Stone Tower Winery

CAPACITY: 250; indoor and outdoor
19925 Hogback Mountain Rd., Leesburg
703-777-2797
stonetowerwinery.com

Union Station

CAPACITY: 2,200; indoor
50 Massachusetts Ave., NE
202-289-8300
unionstationevents.com

Waldorf Astoria Washington DC

CAPACITY: 1,000; indoor
1100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
202-695-1100
hilton.com/en/hotels/dcaawawa

Willard InterContinental

CAPACITY: 350; indoor
1401 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
800-424-6835
washington.intercontinental.com

Woodend Sanctuary & Mansion

CAPACITY: 170; indoor and outdoor
8940 Jones Mill Rd., Chevy Chase
301-652-9188 ext. 38
woodendsanctuary.org

Invitations and Calligraphy

Calligraphette Co.

@calligraphetteco
calligraphetteco.com

Curious Fox Press

@curiousfoxpress
curiousfoxpress.com

The Dandelion Patch

@thedandelionpatch
thedandelionpatch.com

Emily Baird Design

@emilybairddesign
emilybaird.com

Every Little Something

@everylittlesomething
everylittlesomething.com

Fig. 2

@fig2design
fig2design.com

Fingers in Ink

@fingersinink
fingersinink.com

Flourishing Penguin

@flourishingpenguin
flourishingpenguin.com

Kelly Joyce Design

@kellyjoycedesign
kellyjoycedesign.com

Laura Hooper Design House

@laurahooperdesignhouse
laurahooperdesignhouse.com

Leah Letters

@leahletters_
leahletters.com

Meant To Be Calligraphy

@meanttobedc
meanttobecalligraphy.com

Oh Eleven Studio

@ohelevenstudio
oheleven.com

Ruby the Fox

@rubythefox
rubythefox.com

Social on Weekends

@socialonweekends
socialonweekends.com

Sugar Taylor Co.

@sugartaylorco
sugartaylor.co

Write Liz Write

@writelizwrite
writelizwrite.com

Jewelers

Boone & Sons Jewelers

Multiple area locations
booneandsons.com

Charles Schwartz & Son Jewelers

Chevy Chase
202-363-5432;
Willard InterContinental
202-737-4757
charlesschwartz.com

Dominion Jewelers

Falls Church
703-237-3737
dominionjewelers.com

Shah & Shah Distinctive Jewelers

202-223-6001
shah-shah.com

Tiny Jewel Box

202-393-2747
tinyjewelbox.com

Lighting

A2Z Music Factory

703-444-1562
a2zmusicfactory.com

Dan Goldman Events & Weddings

202-215-3655
dangoldmanevents.com

Digital Lightning

301-987-0511
digitallightning.com

Event Dynamics

410-360-3585
eventdynamics.net

4Wall Entertainment

410-242-3322
4wall.com

Frost DC

703-550-7707
frostdc.com

The LightSource Company

240-200-0730
thelightsourcecompany.com

Limos and Transportation

Chariots for Hire

301-650-9191
chariotsforhire.com

Fleet Transportation

866-933-2600
fleettransportation.com

Limousines, Inc.

800-652-8224
limos-inc.com

MJ Valet

202-587-2745
mjvalet.com

Point to Point Limousines

703-771-8100
pointtopointlimo.com

Reston Limousine

703-478-0500
restonlimo.com

RMA

301-654-7433
rmalimo.com

Sunny's Worldwide Chauffeur Transportation

866-721-4958
sunnylimo.com

Thoroughbred

443-637-2270
ridethoroughbred.com

Men's Attire and Tuxedos

Alton Lane

202-335-9665
altonlane.com

The Black Tux

Multiple Maryland and Virginia locations
theblacktux.com

Brian Alexander Bespoke

brianalexanderbespoke.com

Capital Custom Clothiers

Annapolis
410-268-3090
capitalcustomclothiers.com

Enzo Custom

202-223-0000
enzocustom.com

Miguel Wilson Collection

Oxon Hill
240-451-2020
miguelwilson.com

Suitsupply

202-280-1742;
Tysons Galleria
571-200-3302
suitsupply.com

Tuxedo by Sarno

Alexandria
703-684-1764
tuxedobysarno.com

Music

A2Z Music Factory

703-444-1562
a2zmusicfactory.com

Bachelor Boys Band

517-775-2815
bachelorboysband.com

Bialek's Music

301-340-6206
bialeksmusic.com

Black Tie Entertainment

703-803-7722
musicdj.com

Chris Laich Music Services

240-418-6207
chrislaich.com

Dan Goldman Events

202-215-3655
dangoldmanevents.com

District Remix

443-832-3911
districtremix.com

DJ Chris Stiles

(official DJ of the Washington Nationals, also known as Stylus Chris)
888-800-3526
elanartists.com

DJ Max Powers

240-472-4569
djmaxpowers.com

DJ Phlipz

djphlipz.com

DJ Tezrah

tezrah.com

Élan Artists

888-800-3526
elanartists.com

Lucy Black Entertainment

202-780-8360
lucyblackentertainment.com

Millennium

301-762-1800
washingtontalent.com

Mixing Maryland

443-603-9150
mixingmaryland.com

MyDeejay

888-438-6935
mydeejay.com

Nation

888-800-3526
elanartists.com/nation

Pike Productions

301-831-9500
pikeproductionsdc.com

Sam Hill Entertainment

866-726-4455
samhillbands.com

Sound Connection

301-869-8855
kushnerentertainment.com

The Source

301-869-8855
kushnerentertainment.com

Spectrum

301-762-1800
washingtontalent.com

Washington Talent Agency

301-762-1800
washingtontalent.com

Zandi Entertainment

571-406-3600
zandientertainment.com

Officials

Ceremonies by Shelby Tuck-Horton

ceremoniesbysheibytkhorton.com

Ceremony Officials

ceremonyofficials.com

Sincerely Pete

@sincerelypete
sincerelypete.com

Wedding Ceremonies by Jeff

weddingceremoniesbyjeff.com

With This Ring I Thee Wedd

withthisringitheewedd.com

Party Rentals, Decor, and Design

Brightly Ever After

brightlyeverafter.com

Curated Events

curatedevents.com

DC Rental

dcrental.com

Design Foundry

foundrycrew.com

Fabrication Events

fabricationevents.com

Honeywood Event + Tent

honeywoodrentals.com

Maison de Carine

maisondecarine.com

Paisley & Jade

paisleyandjade.com

Party Rental Ltd.

partyrentalltd.com

Perfect Settings

perfectsettings.com

Pretty Little Wedding Co.

prettylittleweddingco.com

Revolution Event Design & Production

eventrevolution.com

Select Event Group

selecteventgroup.com

Social Supply Design & Decor

*@socialsupplydesign
socialsupplydesign.com*

Something Vintage

somethingvintagerentals.com

Table Manners

tablemannersdc.com

White Glove Rentals

whiteglove-rentals.com

Photographers

Abby Jiu Photography

*@abbyjiu
abbyjiu.com*

David Abel

*@davidabel.co
davidabel.co*

Akbar Sayed Photography

*@akbarsayedphotography
akbarsayedphotography.com*

Alicia Lacey Photography

*@alicialaceyphoto
alicialaceyphotography.com*

Amelia Johnson Photography

*@ameliajohnsonphoto
amelia-johnson.com*

Angelika Johns Photography

*@angelikajohns
angelikajohns.com*

Anna and Mateo

*@annaandmateo
annaandmateo.com*

Anna Schmidt Photography

*@annaschmidtphoto
annaschmidtphoto.com*

Astrid Photography

*@astridphoto
astridphoto.com*

Rob Aveau

*@robaveau
robaveau.com*

Barbara O Photography

*@barbaraophotography
barbaraophotography.com*

Barbarah Perttula Photo

*@perrtulaweddings
barbarahperrtula.com*

Adam Barnes

*@adambarnesphoto
adambarnes.com*

Lindley Battle

*@lindleybattle
lindleybattle.com*

Neysha Bauer

*@neyshabauerphoto
neyshabauer.com*

Birds of a Feather Photography

*@birdsofafeatherphotos
birdsofafeatherphotos.com*

Lisa Blume

*@lisablumephoto
lisablume.co*

Costola Photography

*@costola_photography
costolaphotography.com*

Danielle Real Photography

*@daniellerealphotography
daniellerealphotography.com*

Nikki Daskalakis

*@nikkidaskalakis
nikkidaskalakis.com*

Winnie Dora

*@winnie_dora
winniedora.com*

Eli Turner Studios

*@eliturnerstudios
eliturner.com*

Emily Gude Photo

*@emily.gude
egudephoto.com*

Erin Kelleher Photography

*@erinkelleherphoto
erinkelleherphotography.com*

Genevieve Leiper Photography

*@genevieveleiperphotography
genevieveleiper.com*

Hana Gonzalez

*@hanagonzalezphoto
hanagonzalez.com*

Kate Headley

*@kateheadley
kateheadleyweddings.com*

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Bridal Magic, Seam to Seam – Claudia Vasquez

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International Spy Museum 	The Museum's Ballroom and Rooftop Terrace offer breath-taking views of the city and waterfront. Our experienced events team is excited to work with you to create your unique SPY wedding.	400 <i>indoor</i>
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Estate of Mind

The estate sale is an anachronism that endures. Like so many others, I can't resist its allure.

By Eric Wills

I DON'T REMEMBER MY FIRST. BUT I remember the first one that stirred my imagination, that seduced me with its charms. It was a Saturday morning, April 2021. The house was a stately brick manse on a corner lot in Chevy Chase, a pair of small concrete lions guarding the door. A crowd had gathered by the time I arrived, congregating on the lawn and in front of the brick-and-wrought-iron gates, everyone wearing masks because of the pandemic. We had come because, as estate sales go, this one had star power.

"He was a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for the *New York Times* and a speechwriter for President Nixon. She is an accomplished jewelry designer," the advertisement on EstateSales.net read. He was William Safire, and she was Helene Safire, née Helene Belmar Julius—not just a jewelry designer but a model and a classical pianist. In the '90s, I had dipped into Safire's "On Language" columns in the *Times*, enamored by the musings of a man who had coined the phrase "nattering nabobs of negativity" to lampoon Nixon's critics. Charmed by his alliterative prowess, if not his politics, I couldn't resist the chance to peek inside his house.

Estate sales, especially high-profile ones, usually require waiting—lots of waiting. Most feature a list: first to arrive, first inside when the sale begins, usually at 9 or 10 AM. This one handed out numbers, in my case something approaching triple digits. Safire had passed away from cancer in 2009, and Belmar Julius had finally decided to downsize, selling the property for \$2.6 million a few weeks before the sale. When my number was called, it was like stepping into a house museum, but more intimate. Safire with Nixon, Henry Kissinger, Spiro Agnew—a collection of signed photographs lined the walls. I was drawn to his office, awash in books, including dozens of copies of his own novels. The choice offerings were, by then, long gone: The majority of his book collection—many copies inscribed—had been purchased for tens of thousands of dollars by area shops Wonder Book and Capitol Hill Books.

But there were treasures still to be found. In the kitchen, tucked into a corner, I discovered mine: a midcentury rosewood bar cart by Danish designer Ludvig Pontopidan. The handle was cracked, the finish worn, but one could imagine Safire pouring himself a bourbon, neat, soda on the side—his go-to order—before retiring to his office to finish a column. The price, \$300, was a bit steep given the condition. So, as some sales allow, I placed a bid, \$160, and waited to hear my fate.

ESTATE SALES ARE NEARLY ALWAYS precipitated by a major life event—divorce, downsizing, bankruptcy, death. More comprehensive than a garage sale, they usually include the bulk of someone's possessions, perhaps even a vintage



Shoppers lined up on a recent Saturday for an estate sale in Bethesda.

Mercedes or Thunderbird. On any given weekend, crowds flock to the dozens of sales in the area. There are the obsessives, always hunting for treasures, for whom estate sales constitute a clinical addiction. There are the gawkers, enthralled by a glimpse inside the house of a neighbor or local celebrity. There are the big-name dealers, who haul off the designer furniture and jewelry. There are the collectors, who deal in comic books or vintage LPs. There are the pickers, who might flip their finds—a midcentury desk, a Persian rug—on Instagram or Facebook Marketplace. There are the casuals, enticed by the promise of scoring Prada shoes for a discount or a bespoke piece of art for their apartment.

I straddle a few of these categories. At the start of the pandemic, estate sales



Above, in the living room at the Bethesda sale.

Jewelry is a big draw at estate sales, especially with precious metals at all-time highs.



moved online. Because supply chains were snarled and almost everyone was embarking on some kind of redesign as they hunkered down at home, bidding could be intense, a Cabernet-fueled, logic-defying showdown. I, too, was looking for furniture, specifically a vintage Womb Chair that my upholsterer, a former Knoll employee, could refashion in velvet. Like so many others, I realized I could sell a few pieces on the side for extra cash. And so I joined the host of flippers who hung out their shingle during the pandemic. When in-person sales returned, I started going to those, too.

The lure is in the hunt. In 2005, at an

estate in Louisiana, a collector bought a painting for less than \$10,000; it turned out to be Leonardo da Vinci's "Salvator Mundi," which sold at auction in 2017 for \$450 million. Big scores have become less common in the age of Google Lens, which makes it easier to identify pricey antiques.

What's hot now? According to Lori James, owner of Ararity Services, a downsizing-and-auction company in Alexandria, high-end art glass, Baccarat crystal, vintage Legos, rare vinyl records, designer clothing, furniture by the woodworker George Nakashima, and paintings by the late Gene Davis, a DC artist whose



Lori James of Ararity Services with some of the treasures she sells in her weekly auctions.

sale at the Cathedral Heights house of a *Los Angeles Times* editor who, sometime in the 1990s, had opened a European bureau for the newspaper. Michelin and Blue guides to France, posters of Chartres, “French Made Easy” VHS tapes—everywhere the trappings of that expat life, from an age when newspaper correspondents oozed glamour.

A similar nostalgia informs tales from the golden age of estate sales. Karen Jones, owner of Greater Washington Estate Services, remembers one she did for Betty Beale, a gossip columnist for the *Washington Star* who died in 2006. In the attic, Jones found a suitcase full of letters. “Betty dear,” read one, “please don’t worry about the President’s shirt. You were so kind to have it cleaned. The flowers were lovely. Mamie.” An artifact from a dinner with the Eisenhowers, one of countless pieces of Beale ephemera that Jones unearthed and sold. In 2018, she hosted one for the late senator and astronaut John Glenn at his Potomac house. “People slept on the front lawn. There were helicopters overhead. I heard from every magazine: *Newsweek*, *People*,” she recalls. The Marine Corps Museum purchased one of Glenn’s flight jackets listed for \$28,500. Silverstein remembers staging a sale in Bethesda for Edith Ronne, the first American woman to set foot on Antarctica: “We had penguins coming out the wazoo.” And one she hosted for two swingers in their fifties, who had a sex room in their house with belts, chains, and costumes. She and her team uncovered party photos as they prepped for the sale—artifacts from a secret life, one requiring discretion.

Post-pandemic, in-person sales seem, much like the items themselves, a relic. Online auction sites have proliferated—AuctionNinja, CTBids, MaxSold—making it easier to sell your own valuables or host an estate sale online, with pickup at the home for winning bidders. James, the co-owner of an estate-sale company before starting Ararity, launched her own auction house during Covid. Each week, she brings in about 15 truckloads of items from local estates and sells more than a thousand

works are displayed at the National Gallery of Art and the Phillips. And, with precious metals at all-time highs, gold and silver. “Silver brings the dealers in, but it’s for weight,” says Patti Silverstein, a co-owner of Metropolitan Estate Sales in Lanham, which ran the Safire sale. “They come with their scales, they come with their acid.” Books have enjoyed a post-pandemic resurgence,

reports Joanna Shreve Cody, owner of Bethesda’s Savvy Downsizing & Estate Sales. And, of course, anything midcentury modern, my preferred beat.

The voyeuristic thrill holds equal sway, at least for me. A novelist bereft of ideas need only spend a weekend visiting sales and the outlines of countless domestic dramas will emerge. Last year, I attended a

Estate-Sale Tips

Need to host a sale?

Here are suggestions for finding a company.

Do Your Research

Few rules and restrictions govern the estate-sale business. For starters, check references and online reviews, and ask questions. “Do you have a business license? Are you insured?” says Karen Jones of Greater Washington Estate Services. The American Society of Estate Liquidators offers certification; it lists qualified individuals on its website who have agreed to abide by the society’s code of ethics. Stories abound of dealers or friends and family of the company getting first crack at choice items before a sale, for example. You want someone who will look out for your best interests.

Get It in Writing

Make sure to sign a contract that considers all the potential contingencies of a sale and that lays out specific fees, if

any, for cleaning post-sale or consigning or tossing leftover items.

Manage Your Expectations

Those shelves of Delft pottery that your mom collected as an investment? They now go for a song. Check recent sales on LiveAuctioneers.com or eBay or to get a sense of the going rate for antiques. Most companies will bring in appraisers to help price more obscure items.

Keep the Threads

A lot of people will offload all the clothing in a house before staging a sale. But that’s a mistake, says estate-sale influencer Maddy Brannon. Vintage clothing can draw people in: “It’s actually a pretty important piece of the sale.”

And if you’re looking to score a bargain, consider this advice:

Pick the Right Sales

Estate sales come in many forms. Some are expertly curated—they tend to have higher prices but more refined offerings. And some are glorified garage sales, with items tossed into boxes. Check out the listings and photos on EstateSales.net or Facebook Marketplace to get a sense of what a sale might have.

Make a Last-Minute Offer

Most sales run for two or three days over a weekend, and some companies drop prices by a predetermined amount each day: 50 percent off on the last day, for instance. Scoring a deal gets easier in the waning hours. For items with big sticker prices, companies may decide to consign them to auction, so be realistic when making a bid.

lots. “If there’s treasure in the house, this girl’s gonna find it,” says James, who once scored a \$20,000 Picasso vase for \$4 at a Maryland garage sale.

And yet the in-person sale has demonstrated surprising staying power. For one thing, the auction model makes less sense for inexpensive items: glassware, old games, knickknacks. For another, the community that’s developed around in-person sales remains a draw. “We missed our people,” says Shreve Cody about the pandemic hiatus. “It’s a different shopper who comes for the experience than one who’s looking online to add the perfect lamp to their living room.”

For those who fear that the estate-sale audience may be grayning out, I present Maddy Brannon, a 34-year-old standup comic who began attending sales when she was decorating her Brightwood Park rowhouse with her husband. “All my art is from estate sales,” she says. “That’s how it

started.” Lamps, rugs, side tables, glassware, a decorative goldfish bowl from a former Smithsonian employee: As Brannon posted her finds on social media, she discovered an audience—64,000 strong on Instagram—and now authors a weekly Substack blast spotlighting the best sales in the region.

I experienced the Brannon effect firsthand last October when I attended an Alexandria sale she featured with a heavyweight list of designer names: Louis Vuitton, Versace, Prada, Dior. The intrigue: The sale appeared to be for Corrine Brown, the former Democratic congresswoman from Florida who was charged with fraud for her involvement in a charity slush-fund scheme and served nearly three years in prison. The crowd skewed young; they sifted through the designer clothing with the insatiability of a fighter breaking fast. As for me, it marked the first time seeing a congresswoman’s bra.

IN JUNE, I ENCOUNTERED A LISTING for an estate sale unlike any I had ever seen. “I’m a performance artist, and I’m turning my post-marital estate sale into a filmed performance and documentary,” the Facebook ad read. “This is more than a sale. It’s a conversation about change, identity, sacrifice, and starting over.”

On a Sunday afternoon, I pulled up to a midcentury-modern house in Alexandria’s Waynewood neighborhood. The front lawn was filled with art, glassware, vintage barstools, Ikea chairs—everything that the host, Jodi Askew, was unable to squeeze into a Honda Fit before embarking on a cross-country road trip to start a new life, post-divorce, in Portland. The emotional backstory of a sale usually remains a veiled mystery—but not here.

“I was in a ten-year relationship with a really good man, and through the course of that relationship, I realized I

was queer,” Askew, 31, who uses they/ them pronouns, said in their living room turned studio, as a film crew recorded. “I didn’t really want the domestic life I thought I wanted.”

For five hours, a stream of shoppers/ subjects sat with Askew and the film crew, sharing stories of love, loss, and self-discovery—a pandemic marriage to a man in Denmark gone wrong, the struggles of being queer in an immigrant family—as some of Askew’s friends logged sales outside. At one point, three recent college grads, one of them wearing a WHITE DUDES FOR HARRIS T-shirt, haggled over the price of a midcentury-style bedside table and a green bench—the trio had just moved to Bloomingdale and were furnishing a group house. Askew asked them if they wanted to be part of the documentary. One of them, sporting a mustache and a newly acquired capcut print, was game, and as his housemates loaded their purchases into a Subaru Outback, he discussed his first love and the challenges of getting sober.

How hard was it to part with so many possessions? “Seeing the things I procured at much simpler times in my life” left Askew “mourning that innocence.” But “having them live on with somebody else who sees

them with fresh eyes feels beautiful.”

In early 2022, I found myself on the other side of a sale when my mother passed away. She had been a flea-market obsessive and had amassed a basement of finds in her New Jersey townhouse that she intended to resell but never got around to: Danish Modern furniture, sterling-silver flatware. I kept various heirlooms but called in an estate-sale company for the rest, a lifetime’s worth of possessions—vintage clothing purchased in London in the ’60s, the secretary desk from my childhood bedroom. I was grieving and vulnerable, needed someone I could trust, and had accepted that the commission—companies typically take 35 to 45 percent of the proceeds—was worth the convenience. And, for a little extra cash post-sale, the company recycled and donated the leftovers and trashed the final remainders, leaving an empty basement.

I didn’t attend the sale; I didn’t want to see the masses wrangling over my mom’s possessions. I don’t think she would have much liked it. But now when I visit a sale, I feel like I’m communing with her spirit, sharing in the chase. Especially at one precipitated by a death,

I’m attuned to life’s evanescence, reminded that my time will also come.

Which brings me back to that rosewood bar cart. The Sunday after I attended the Safire sale, I got the call. I had won it. My local one-man furniture shop repaired the crack in the handle and refinished it. There was no obvious place for it in our house, so I decided to list it and found a buyer on Facebook Marketplace—a collector of midcentury furniture. I turned a small profit, and for a brief moment I owned a relic from old Washington, which will undoubtedly get handed down again, in a cycle of conservation that will continue long after I’m gone. **W**



Influencer Maddy Brannon, above, posts her favorite sales each week, in addition to hosting an estate-sale podcast.

Mary Ellen Seravalli of Savvy Downsizing & Estate Sales with customers at a sale in Dupont Circle.

PHOTOGRAPH ON LEFT BY EYV IMAGES



Water Bar in Water Park

The Briefing

National Landing

Home to Amazon, this Arlington neighborhood has a wealth of new restaurants, shops, and things to do (beach volleyball, anyone?)

By **Kate Corliss** and **Lindsey Byman**

THE ARRIVAL OF AMAZON'S NORTHERN Virginia headquarters in 2018 spurred a flurry of development in Crystal City, Pentagon City, and the northern end of Potomac Yard. It also led to a rebranded name for the Arlington neighborhood: National Landing, in a nod to nearby Reagan National Airport. Today, the area around Amazon HQ2 is home to a multitude of new places to live, shop, and dine. Here are some of our favorite recent arrivals.

EAT AND DRINK

Chez Happy Hour

Restaurateur brothers Eric and Ian Hilton, the duo behind the French bistros Chez Billy Sud and Café Colline, have added yet another Gallic outpost to their H2 Collective repertoire: **Bar Colline** (269 19th

Ct. S.), which opened in July. The menu includes classics like steak frites and duck confit, as well as a lineup of shareable plates that will rotate weekly. At the 50-foot wraparound bar, you can celebrate happy hour daily with \$6 wines.

Dumpling Redux

Bar Chinois (244 19th Ct. S.) arrived in National Landing in May, a new incarnation of the vibey Michelin-recommended Gallery Place restaurant led by chef Satang Ruangsangwatana. Dine on elevated hits such as crystal-prawn dumplings and crab ragoon served with an apricot duck sauce. The RAMMY Award-winning cocktail menu is rife with creative French-inspired drinks—including the Coco Marseille, made with tequila and basil-sesame coconut cream.

Taste of Yucatán

Tacombi started as a food truck in the Mexican beach town of Playa del Carmen, expanded to a New York City garage in 2010, and arrived at National Landing (1550 Crystal Dr.) in late 2021. The subtle twists on traditional Yucatán cuisine—think beer-battered-cod tacos, open-faced beef rib-eye quesadillas, and burritos stuffed with roasted sweet potato—have won a local audience and led to a second location in Bethesda.

Sip and Stroll

In 2023, when developer JBG Smith reimagined a site next to the Metro as **Water Park** (1601 Crystal Dr.), the goal was to create an outdoor food hall that would double as a community gathering spot. The park features two full-service restaurants and a smattering of grab-and-go kiosks—including outposts of local favorites Falafel Inc. and Call Your Mother. The pièce de résistance is the Water Bar, which serves local oysters and refined cocktails from its perch atop a massive fountain/water sculpture. Also on the one-acre-plus site: a performance stage and art installations. The park is a “sip and stroll” zone, meaning visitors are free to roam with any alcohol purchased onsite.

The Diner Reimagined

Michelin-starred Venezuelan chef Enrique Limardo, renowned for his work at the popular DC restaurants Seven Reasons and Imperfecto, migrated south of the Potomac with the opening of **Surreal** (2117 Crystal Dr.) in late 2023. The all-day diner offers unconventional twists on American comfort classics—for example, a foot-long beef sausage topped with Oaxaca cheese and cabbage relish, plus mac and cheese served atop breaded veal. Don't miss the weekend brunch menu, which includes standard egg plates and waffles along with beef-Saigon-and-pineapple sandwiches plus corn-cheddar quiche.

Market Move

The National Landing spinoff of **Mae's Market** (1450 S. Eads St.) opened just before the cafe's original Old Town location shuttered at the start of this year. The new location sports the same selection of fresh deli sandwiches and house-baked pastries—including seasonal-fruit Danish and cinnamon-sugar-coated kouign-amann. Located in Amazon HQ2, it's an ideal spot for a quick working lunch.

Street Eats

What started as a pandemic-era ghost kitchen, spearheaded by furloughed staff at José Andrés's China Chilcano, has turned into a full-service Mexican street-food restaurant that's expanding across the region. **Taqueria Xochi** (1450 S. Eads St.) arrived in National Landing late last year, the third iteration of the restaurant to open since 2020. Order the signature torta-like cemita: a sesame-seed-sprinkled

roll stuffed with your choice of beef, chicken, or veg. Pair it with a house margarita—preferably during happy hour—or a spirit-free piña chamoyada smoothie, finished with chamoy, diced pineapple, and a tamarind-candy straw.

Peruvian Provisions

A larger alternative to its first brick-and-mortar space in Union Market's La Cosecha food hall, **Peruvian Brothers** (1450 S. Eads St.) opened at Amazon HQ2 in late 2023. Brothers Giuseppe and Mario Lanzoni celebrate their heritage with baked empanadas, spiced rotisserie chicken, and picarones—squash-and-sweet-potato doughnuts drizzled with chancaca honey. Pisco-sour slushies headline the beverage menu, but there are plenty more options at the full bar.

Joe Joint

In 2003, Sean and Kalea Flynn opened their first coffee shop in Huntersville, North Carolina. The venture, **Coffee Republic**, has since expanded to our area, with the newest location opening in National Landing (3130 Potomac Ave.) in March. The menu features specialty lattes, including spicy Aztec mocha and vanilla lavender, as well as all-day breakfast sandwiches and wraps; quiches and pastries; and smoothies. Shop online or in the store for beans from Nicaragua, Colombia, and Brazil.

DO AND SHOP

Flights of Fancy

Before opening **Flight Wine Shop** (269 19th Court S.) in March, owners Swati



Crispy-pillow tuna poke at Surreal

WHAT'S SELLING



Convenient to downtown DC, Reagan National Airport, and I-395, National Landing offers a variety of housing options for urban professionals and families alike, including high-rise condos, townhouses, and single-family homes. Here's a sample of recent sales.

\$395,000

A one-bedroom, one-bathroom condo in Crystal City's Crystal Park building, with a balcony, two parking spaces, and access to a sauna and outdoor swimming pool.

\$530,000

An updated 12th-floor Marina Towers condo in Potomac Yard with one bedroom, one bathroom, and a balcony overlooking the Potomac River.

\$775,000

A 1,426-square-foot condo in Pentagon City with two levels, three bedrooms, two and a half bathrooms, a private entrance, and a patio.

\$975,400

A 2,724-square-foot Potomac Yard condo with three bedrooms, two and a half bathrooms, a rear balcony, and a one-car garage.

\$1,250,000

A 2,600-square-foot house near Crystal City, built in 1962, with four bedrooms, three bathrooms, two living rooms, and a back patio.

PHOTOGRAPH OF TUNA POKE BY MARITZA RONDÓN; HOUSE BY DEREK AND VEE

LIVE HERE, WALK ANYWHERE

National Landing brings it all together – hot spots like Bar Chinois, Bar Colline, Tatte, and Call Your Mother, plus brand-new apartment communities at The Grace, Reva, The Zoe, and Valen, now leasing.

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Bose and Kabir Amir were two-time James Beard Award semifinalists for outstanding wine program at their now-shuttered Flight Wine Bar in Chinatown. The duo's new venture sources 300-plus wines from more than 19 countries, with a focus on organic, sustainable, and native options from small producers. The shop hosts free weekly winetastings and special events, including a holiday wine exchange and producer meet-and-greets. If you're not an oenophile, check out the selection of beer, pre-mixed cocktails, nonalcoholic beverages, cheese, and charcuterie.

Fight Club

Interested in learning the finer points of boxing, kickboxing, Muay Thai, or Brazilian jiu-jitsu? The trainers at **Urban Boxing Gym** (3701 Fairfax Dr.) include the professional mixed-martial-arts fighters Levan Chokheli and Beka Lashkhia, both from the country of Georgia. When

they're not competing, they lead group and private workouts and organize boxing showcases, with fighters from the gym's four area locations as well as local universities. For those looking for a little less contact in their workouts, check out **Club Studio** (3550 S. Clark St.), a fitness center that opened in May. In addition to exercise classes and personal trainers, the studio offers a medspa, a sauna, a pool, cryotherapy, and an organic cafe. Get a free one-day pass to try the boxing, spin, reformer-Pilates, or hot high-intensity interval-training (HIIT) sculpt classes.

Pedi Paradise

Nailsaloon (244 19th Ct. S.) maximizes the pleasure of a mani-pedi with plush leather seats and cocktails. While waiting for your nail or waxing appointment, sip a complimentary bellini, mimosa, tea, wine, or beer. The salon uses non-toxic products and hospital-grade sterilized tools. It also hosts corporate and

private events, including birthdays and baby showers.

Gown Central

A beloved local fixture, **Crystal Boutique** (2231 Crystal Dr.) reopened in January after its former home, the Crystal City Underground, closed last year. Founded in 1970, the shop features designer women's clothing from brands including Hilton Hollis, Joseph Ribkoff, Nina McLemore, and Lourdes Chavez. Make an appointment with a personal shopper and browse the selection of slacks, evening gowns, and mother-of-the-bride dresses. (The boutique accommodates sizes 0 to 26.) Or drop by for one of the regular trunk shows to see collections from around the world.

Flora Focus

Calling all *Love Is Blind* fans. The reality dating show featured the Dupont location of **Plntr** last year. Now the shop—founded in 2020 by James Beach and DC native

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Caitlin Tuttle—has expanded to National Harbor (269 19th Court S.). Offerings include plants, flowers, planters, terrariums, gardening tools, and books. Or attend one of the workshops: Examples include an herbalism seminar led by a hypnotherapist, a punch-needle art class, or—as *Love Is Blind* fans will remember—a pressed-flower workshop.

Local Veg

Dan Hine, a marketing executive in Loudoun County, launched his first farmers market in 2017 after looking for ways to help local food producers. His latest venture, the **Met Park Farmers Market** (1330 S. Fair St.), runs every Saturday and Tuesday this year through October. Find local produce and handmade goods from small businesses and farms, including flowers, candles, dog treats, jewelry, and crocheted bags. Food and drink options can include pupusas, Korean baked treats, Nepali chow mein, breakfast sandwiches, and coffee.



Art Walk

Visiting the market or grabbing dinner in National Landing? Make sure to check out the **hand-painted murals** that have emerged in the neighborhood. Sponsored by the Business Improvement District, they include “Mural 23” (23rd St.), a work by local artists MasPaz, Juan Pineda, Jeff Huntington, and Cita Sadeli. Spanning a full block, it’s one of the largest collaborative murals in the DC area. Other projects include JD Deardourff’s “Waves,” which adorns the entrance to the Mount Vernon Trail by Water Park, and Lisa Marie Thalhammer’s “Harmony Mural” at the Metro plaza.

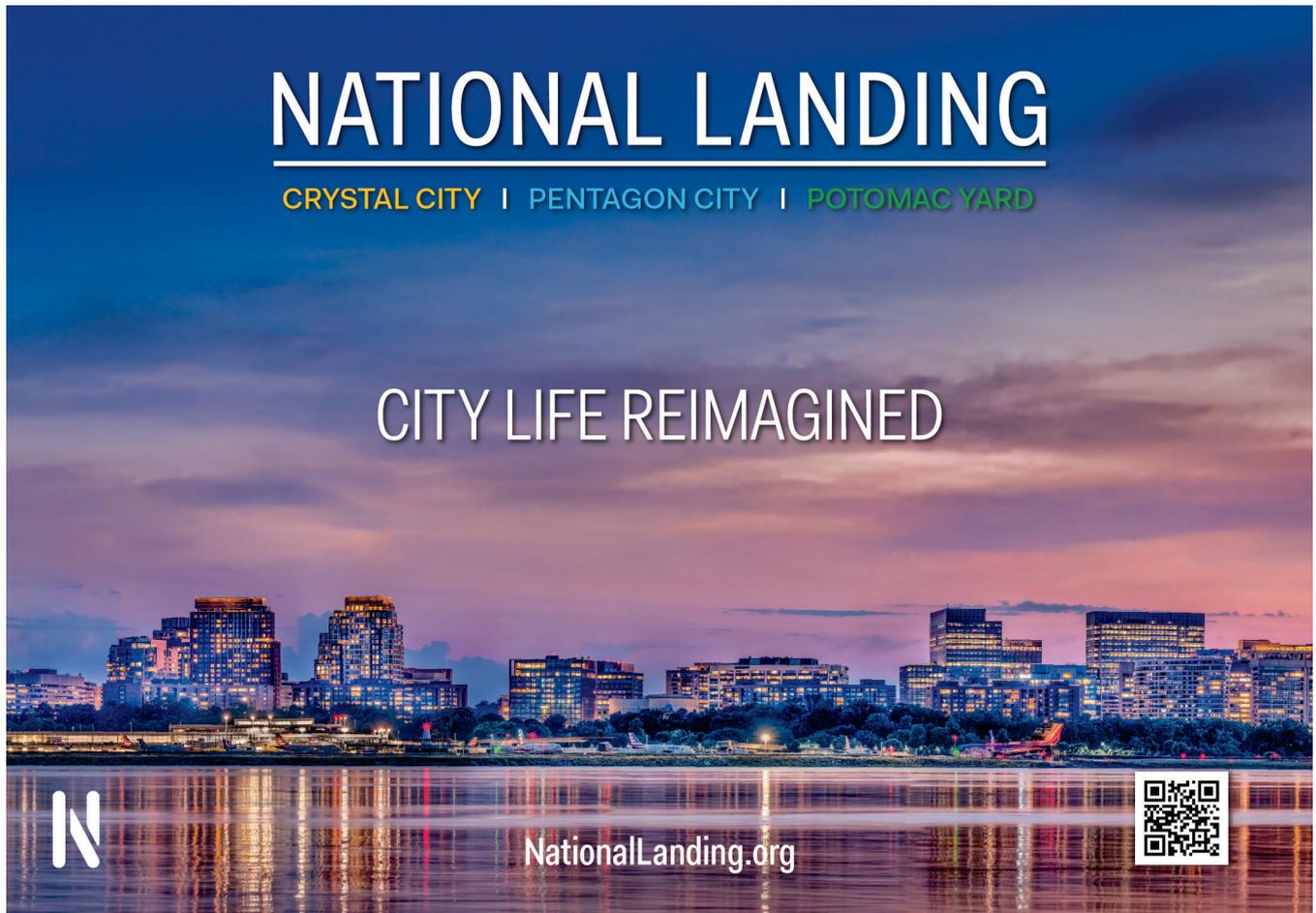
Sporting Summer

Real-estate company JBG Smith, Amazon’s development partner, has teamed up with **Club Volo** (223 23rd St. S.) to build four beach-volleyball courts on one of its still-vacant lots in the neighborhood. Come rent some court time before a new tower rises on the site. **W**

NATIONAL LANDING

CRYSTAL CITY | PENTAGON CITY | POTOMAC YARD

CITY LIFE REIMAGINED



PHOTOGRAPH BY CAITLIN TUTTLE/PLNTR



NationalLanding.org





Off the Market!

A peek inside some of Washington's recent high-end residential transactions

MARYLAND

1 **WHERE:** Potomac.
BOUGHT BY: Samuel H. Gillespie III, a retired oil-and-gas-company lawyer, and Erica H. Gillespie.
LISTED: \$4,595,000.
SOLD: \$4,525,000.
DAYS ON MARKET: 1.
BRAGGING POINTS: A custom-built estate on ten acres featuring a house with six bedrooms, eight and





a half bathrooms, six fireplaces, a sports court, a gym, a sauna, a loggia, and a five-car garage.

2 **WHERE:** Bethesda.

BOUGHT BY: Michael K. Berman, a partner at Paul Hastings, and Alison Berman.

LISTED: \$6,300,000.

SOLD: \$5,900,000.

DAYS ON MARKET: 27.

BRAGGING POINTS:

A 2009 custom-built, 15,500-square-foot residence with eight bedrooms, nine bathrooms, two half baths, an elevator, four fireplaces, two laundry rooms, a theater, a gym, a wine cellar, and a four-car garage.

VIRGINIA

3 **WHERE:** McLean.
SOLD BY:

Ryan Joseph Fitzpatrick, former Washington Commanders quarterback.

LISTED: \$3,400,000.

SOLD: \$3,300,000.

DAYS ON MARKET: 10.

BRAGGING POINTS:

A three-level English manor-style house on two acres with six

bedrooms, six bathrooms, three half baths, a media room, a guest suite, a covered veranda, a deck, a fire pit, and an obstacle course.

DC

WHERE: Wesley Heights.

SOLD BY: Paul G.

Stern, cofounder of Arlington Capital Partners and Thayer Capital Partners.

LISTED: \$9,850,000.

SOLD: \$9,600,000.

DAYS ON MARKET: 65.

BRAGGING POINTS:

A 1927 estate with eight bedrooms, nine bathrooms, four half baths, five fireplaces, an in-law suite, a recreation room, a playroom, a gym, a swimming pool, a pergola, and multiple garages.

WHERE: Georgetown.

BOUGHT BY: Perry Trimble, a financial adviser at Alex. Brown, and William Trimble.

LISTED: \$5,850,000.

SOLD: \$6,000,000.

DAYS ON MARKET: 3.

BRAGGING POINTS:

A renovated three-story

brick house with four bedrooms, three bathrooms, two half baths, an elevator, a saltwater pool, a fountain, and a tiered garden.

4 **WHERE:**

Georgetown.

BOUGHT BY: Ziad

Dalloul, CEO and founder of the telecommunications company Africell Group.

LISTED: \$5,650,000.

SOLD: \$5,200,000.

DAYS ON MARKET: 97.

BRAGGING POINTS:

An 1890 semiattached rowhouse on a double lot with eight bedrooms, five and a half bathrooms, six fireplaces, an elevator, a pool, and a Japanese garden with a fish pond and waterfall.

WHERE: Georgetown.

SOLD BY: Laura Rose

Handman, a content-publishing lawyer at Davis Wright Tremaine, and

Harold M. Ickes, a labor lawyer at Meyer Suozzi.

LISTED: \$4,200,000.

SOLD: \$4,150,000.

DAYS ON MARKET: 11.

BRAGGING POINTS:

A circa-1798 Federal townhouse with six bedrooms, five and a half bathrooms, three fireplaces, a library, space for live-in staff, and a carriage house. **W**

Sales information provided by Bright MLS.





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Washington, DC
Marilyn Charity 202-427-7553



THE WESLIE \$3,850,000
1401 N. Oak St. #912
Arlington, VA
Diane Lewis 703-973-7001
The Lewis Team



WEST LANGLEY \$3,650,000
7400 Churchill Rd.
McLean, VA
Marianne Prendergast 703-626-7500
Will Prendergast 703-434-2711



PRIVATE OFFERING

POTOMAC \$3,100,000
9414 Thrush Ln.
Potomac, MD
Anne Killeen 301-706-0067



GTOWN/BURLEITH \$2,895,000
3622 S St. NW
Washington, DC
Lenore G. Rubino 202-262-1261



OLDE SWINKS MILL \$2,675,000
933 Woburn Ct.
McLean, VA
Marianne Prendergast 703-626-7500
Will Prendergast 703-434-2711



SOLD

WOODLEY PARK \$2,515,000
3013 Cathedral Ave. NW
Washington, DC
Margot Wilson 202-549-2100



GEORGETOWN \$2,495,000
1333 30th St. NW
Washington, DC
Nancy Taylor Bubes 202-386-7813
Annie Stevenson 704-607-5847



AVENEL \$1,775,000
9600 Eagle Ridge Dr.
Bethesda, MD
Anne Killeen 301-706-0067



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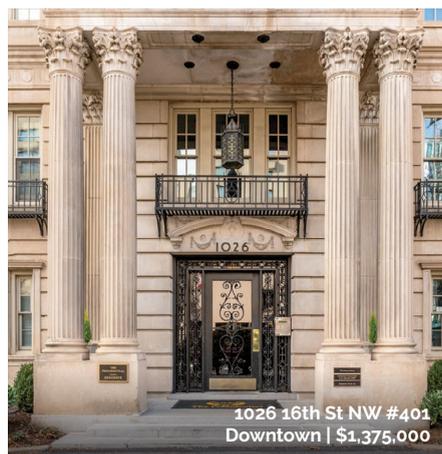
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Deborah Tannen on How Her Interest in Language Began

“I always had an inclination to be observing at the same time that I was talking to people”



LIKE FATHER, LIKE DAUGHTER: Tannen says her dad was “very attuned to ways of speaking.”

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY LINGUISTICS professor Deborah Tannen stepped into the public consciousness with her groundbreaking 1990 book, *You Just Don't Understand*. This runaway bestseller dissected the linguistic differences between men and women. As she framed it there, “If women speak and hear a language of communication and intimacy, while men speak and hear a language of status and independence, then communication between men and women can be like a cross-cultural communication . . .” Recently, the longtime Washingtonian told us about how her infatuation with language shaped her.

“I’M A NEW YORKER, AND New Yorkers talk to everybody. So if you’re sitting next to somebody, you talk to them. You’re in an elevator, you talk to the person who’s there. As a child, I learned to talk to everybody and to find it all interesting.

“Sometimes I think about this: If I was on an airplane when I was younger, I’d always talk to the person next to me, and I really had some of the most fascinating conversations—personal stuff. I don’t do it anymore. Sometimes I wonder why. Is it because I got older? Is it because the culture has changed, that people are more suspicious of each other? I don’t know.

“I was always a literary type. My BA and MA were in English literature; I was on the board of the literary magazine in high school and the editor of the literary magazine in college. You might say, ‘With this literary bent, how did you end up being an academic?’ Well, I realized that I could study conversation in the same way that I’d previously studied literature—that is, looking at the details of language and trying to see patterns in them. So when I was 29, I began grad

school in linguistics.

“I always had an inclination to be observing at the same time that I was talking to people. And I think that’s from being a writer. It’s what novelists do. I sometimes trace it to my father. He was very attuned to ways of speaking, and he was very oriented to language and writing. When people left [the house], he’d say, ‘Oh, she said this and was probably thinking that.’ And a sociolinguist [like me] studies how people use language in their everyday life. They transcribe conversation and then analyze the transcripts. So I guess linguistics put together my interest in people with my interest in language.

“I think it sounds ridiculous, but I always enjoy talking to people about anything. What I don’t like is when people are contrary—when you say it’s raining and they say, no, it’s pouring. And I don’t like when people hear that I’m a linguist and begin to give me a lecture. It’s not unusual, when talking to guys, that when they hear what I do, they want to lecture me about it.”

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SYLVIE McNAMARA

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