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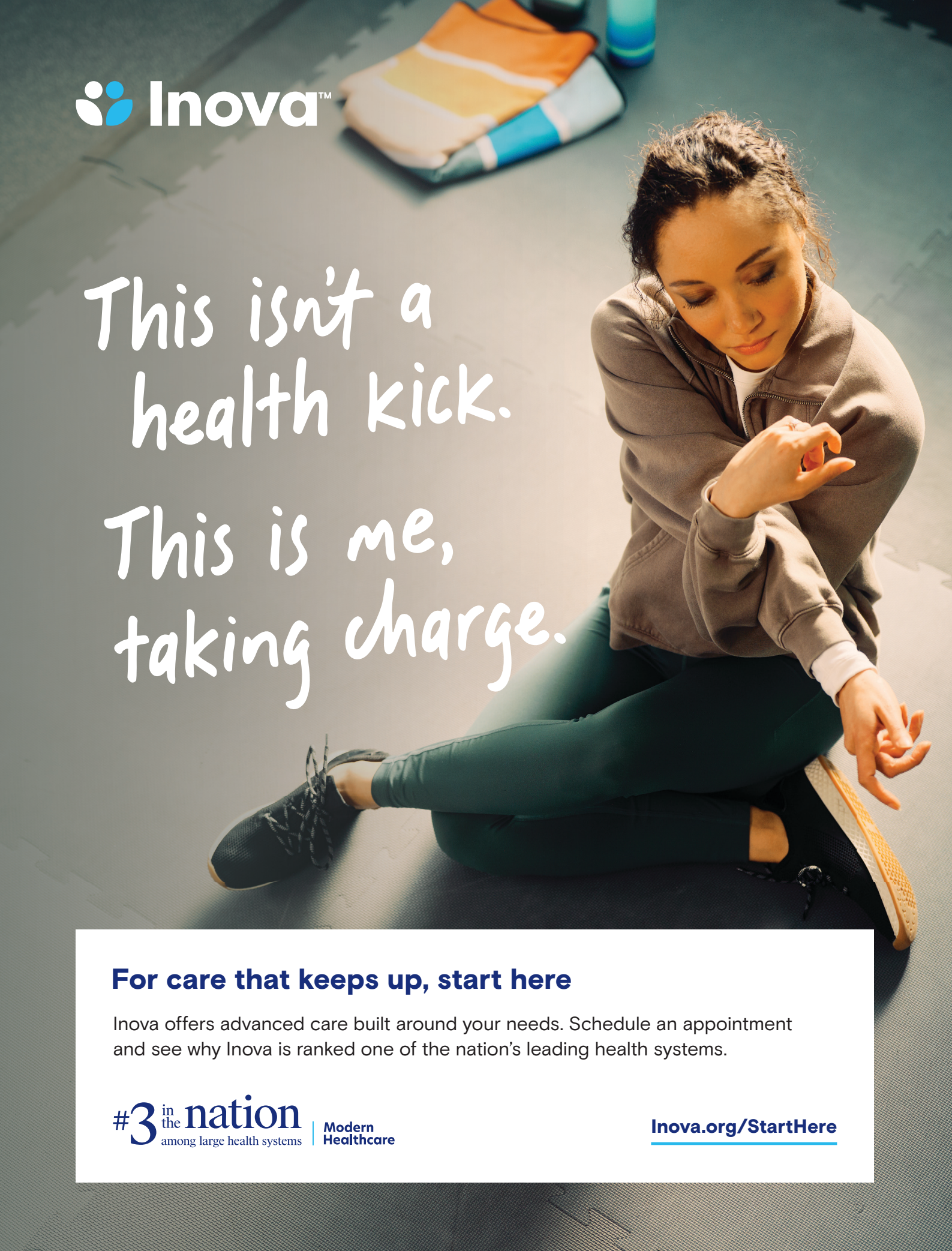

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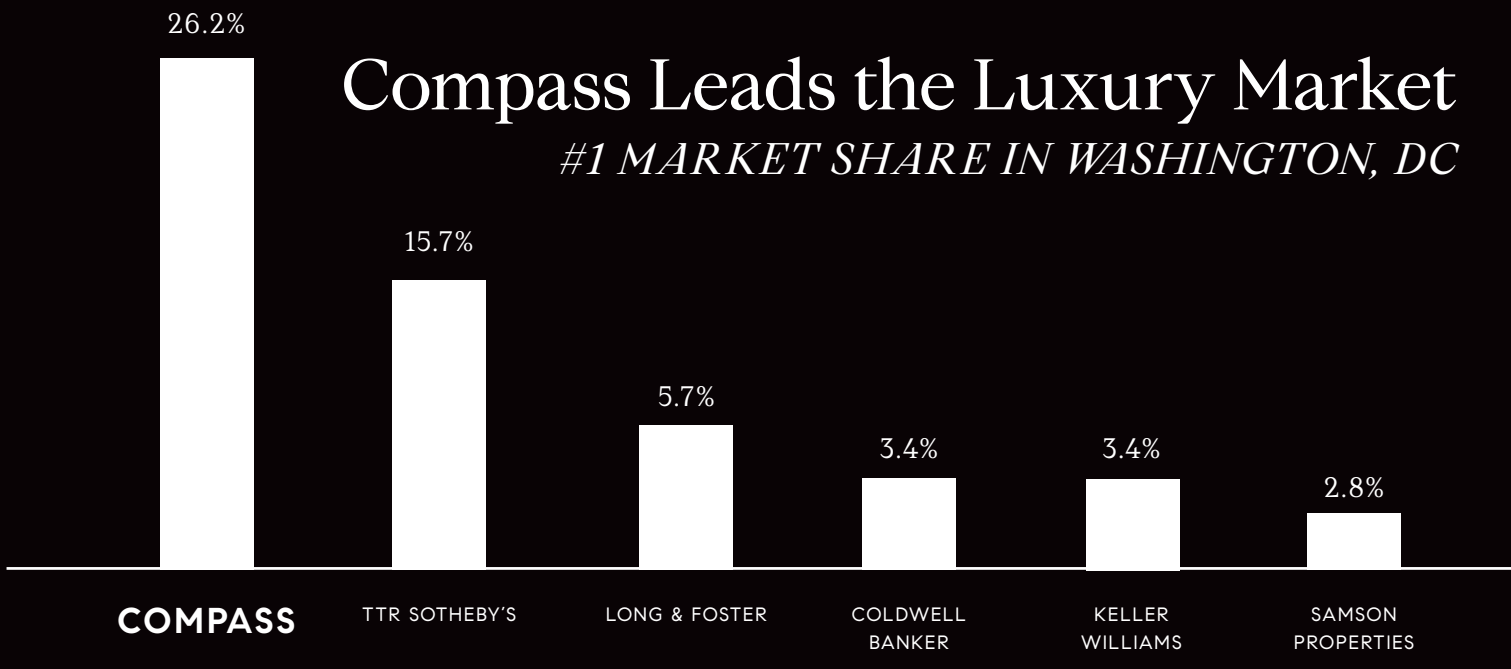

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This page
Photograph by
Tyler Darden

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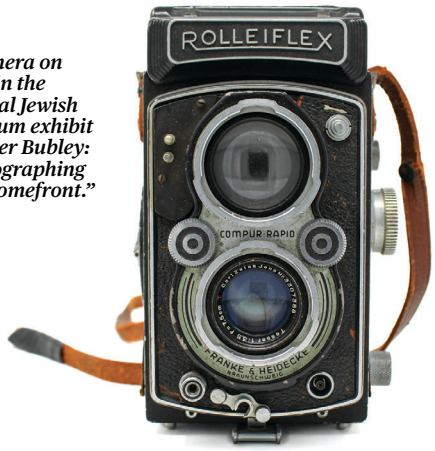



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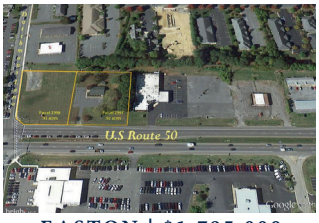

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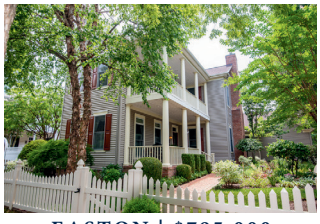

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WE ASKED OUR STAFF:

What was your greatest Halloween costume ever?

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"A Spider-Man costume when I was six or seven. I still remember my excitement. I tried climbing walls and shooting webs from my wrists. Maybe one day."



"My peanut-butter-and-jelly costume with my dog when I was ten. I was jelly. My costume made no sense at school or any place I couldn't bring my dog, but it resulted in some great pictures."



"I was a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup in fourth grade. My mom made the costume. Still my favorite candy!"



"My dad was raking leaves, and I decided that a leaf bag would be perfect for a ghost costume. I made sure I could still eat my lollipop, too."



"My boyfriend and I were Tony and Carmela Soprano. I was Tony, and he made such a gorgeous Carmela."

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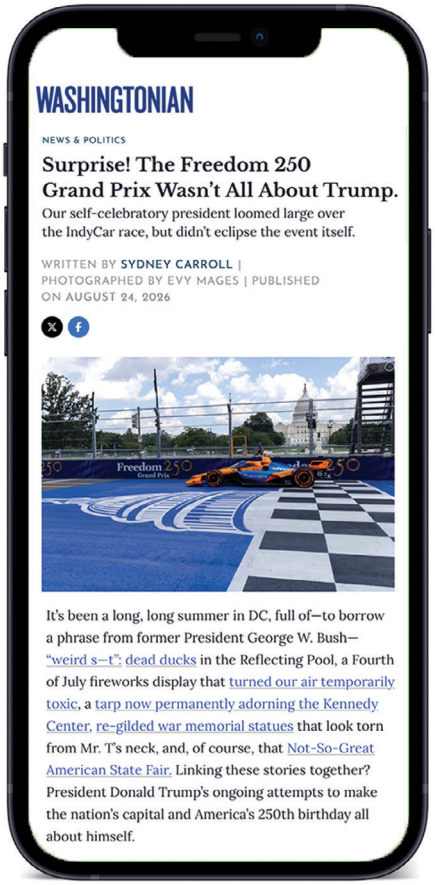
FEEDBACK



Start Your Engines!

***WASHINGTONIAN* EDITORIAL FELLOW** Sydney Carroll went downtown to watch the Freedom 250 Grand Prix and made the case that although Trump loomed over the event, he didn't dominate it. "[M]ost of what I saw scanned as innocuous Americana," she wrote. ". . . People gathered around with food (I tried the pulled-pork sandwich, a 4 out of 10 at best) and watched the race on large screens. You could almost hear the grass, just recovered from the Great American State Fair, sighing beneath our feet." Some Instagram commenters agreed, but others felt Trump's ego was present anyway.

"Thanks Washingtonian - I thought so too. Was really cool, people were nice and polite. Trump came on for 15 mins, people cheered, people booed, that's it. Racing was awesome." –**@horizon_blue_benz**

". . . I had to head downtown for something this weekend, and the vibes were extremely MAGA-coded." –**@onashay**

"I'm not a Trump supporter but a racing fan. I volunteered for the event and attended all 3 days as a spectator. . . . Everyone from the Penske corporation was very nice, professional and put on a great event. I would volunteer again. People asked me if the crowd was full of Trump supporters. Probably but also looked like the typical race fan crowd." –**@sesegram**

"Seriously?! He shut down the entire city due to this nonsense and commuting was a nightmare! Worse than I've ever seen. And this morning the streets still weren't open, despite being shut down for the last two weeks." –**@luminous-wellnesswithjennifer**

"He literally drove around the track in the presidential limo. . . ." –**@cullenheater**

"Listen, if you had fun at the event because you were able to look past everything, then that's fine for you. Please don't try to pull some revisionism on the rest of us. The first tag on your article is quite literally Donald Trump." –**@joeypierceog**

CORRECTIONS

- The August story "Now Comes the Hard Part" implied that presumptive incoming DC delegate Robert White will have a vote in the Committee of the Whole only if Democrats control the House. White's predecessor, Eleanor Holmes Norton, sometimes retained that vote under Republican House control.
- A September correction noting that the August "Dan About Town" had misidentified NBC's Richard Engel as David Bloom misspelled Engel's last name. We regret the double error.

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CAPITAL COMMENT



IN THE RUFF
The Folger has an intriguing exhibit on Shakespeare and Black women, including this image from photographer Kennedi Carter. For more, turn the page.

PHOTOGRAPH BY KENNEDI CARTER/COURTESY OF ROSE GALLERY

The Bard and Black Women

An exhibit at the Folger looks at an under-explored part of history





Two images on display at the library: an engraving used in Phillis Wheatley's 1773 poetry collection and a photo from a 1936 production of Macbeth.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S SONNET 130—the one beginning, "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun"—is one of his best-known and most beloved poems. A satire challenging the way conventional European poetry described women, it has sparked literary debates, class discussions, and, most recently, Folger Shakespeare Library's new exhibition, "To Hear Her Speak: Black Women and Shakespeare."

Named after another line from that sonnet, the free exhibit—which opens October 16 and runs until May 2—explores how Black women have engaged with Shakespeare's work over hundreds of years through literature, performance art, fashion, and activism. **Patricia Akhimie,** the show's curator, spent two years developing the library's most expansive temporary exhibition since its 2024 gallery renovation, with the help of six research fellows and a team of assistants. The result is a collection of nearly 100 objects, including playbills, rare photographs, vintage diaries, a famous *Jet* magazine cover, and visually striking stage costumes. It's all organized chronologically across four sections in the Folger's Stuart and Mimi Rose Rare Book and Manuscript Exhibition Hall. "There's a longstanding myth that Shakespeare's London was not a particularly diverse place, that Shakespeare wouldn't have interacted with Black people," says Akhimie, who also runs the Folger Institute, the library's scholarship-and-research wing. "It's just not true."

The proof is stitched into each section of "To Hear Her Speak," starting with a map marking where Black women worked and lived in London during the Bard's time. Interactive displays and other tools let visitors hear and see the stories of Black women, including an accompanying audio guide featuring Shakespearean actress **Adjoa Andoh.** In one gallery, a rare display of pioneering African American poet **Phillis Wheatley's** handwritten copybook invites viewers into a conversation about slavery, while another room transports them into the future of performance art with celebrity designer **Melissa Simon-Hartman's** metallic gold-winged Afrofuturist costume, which was used in a Royal Shakespeare Company production of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

At one point, visitors can sit inside a re-created New York City living room modeled after the 1950s home of playwright and civil-rights activist **Lorraine Hansberry.** Here, a television broadcasts archival footage of thought leaders **Toni Morrison** and **Maya Angelou** admiring and examining Shakespeare's legacy.

For Baltimore textile artist **Suzanne Coley,** "To Hear Her Speak" provides a chance to reach an audience that might not otherwise encounter her work. Coley's embroidered book bindings offer a notable contemporary component. Black women, she says, "have been speaking, but too often in sotto voce, or hushed voices. This exhibition gives us the opportunity to lift those voices so they can be heard and, in my case, seen."

—BRIANA THOMAS

TOP PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; BOTTOM COURTESY OF JUSTIN WM. MOYER

SMOOTH TALK

A DC attorney recently launched a podcast, *Off the Top,* that features engaging interviews with bald men. It's worth a listen even if you're not a member of the bare-headed club.



THE HOST

The podcast was created by **Justin Wm. Moyer,** a longtime reporter for the *Washington Post* who got a law degree in his spare time and now is a lawyer doing a clerkship with a DC judge. He's also a fixture of the city's music scene, currently playing in the band Light Beams.

THE GOAL

Though the topic is baldness, *Off the Top* should appeal to anyone who feels self-conscious about aspects of their appearance—which is more or less everybody. For Moyer, the idea is mostly to feel better about his own hair loss. "I know logically it's silly to think about this so much, but emotionally I don't feel okay with it yet," he says. "It's been 20 years, so I've got to try to address this: 'Let's talk about it, let's surface these issues. Do other people feel the same way?' "

THE PODCAST

Moyer's been mulling over a show like this since he started losing his hair. "It's a dramatic thing to go bald," he says, "and nobody really talks about it. I just want to see what people think about it." The first episode features a candid, vulnerable conversation with **Craig Wedren** of DC punk greats Shudder to Think. "In the end, it was somewhat enlightening and encouraging to hear that he is okay with it," Moyer says. "It's not something he worries about anymore." As Wedren puts it in the interview, "I'm at peace with my pate."

—ROB BRUNNER



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Sole Searching

We went to Sneaker Con to check out all the eye-popping footwear

Sneakerheads converged on DC's convention center in August for the city's annual Sneaker Con, which featured more than 200 vendors selling and trading shoes, streetwear, and memorabilia. We spoke to a few attendees about the footwear they were sporting. –JENNA LEE

1. **Piper Holly,** an online content creator, was wearing the Air Jordan 1 Zoom CMFT 2 x Teyana Taylor. The kicks, also called "A Rose From Harlem," are a collaboration between Nike and the *One Battle After Another* actor. "You won't find a lot of sneakers like this," Holly said. "I like unique detail – that's part of my style."

2. **Ruen Baker** has been building his sneaker collection since he was 13. Now 20, he owns more than 400 pairs, which he estimated cost him more than $300,000. His carefully curated Supreme outfit was half blue, half red, complete with one Air Jordan 4 Retro Flyknit in each color. What inspired it? "America," he said.

3. These pearl-studded Lanvins were the key part of **Bella Trivane's** outfit. "I usually pick something that's loud and catches the eye, and then I wear something more muted on top," she said.

4. **Brian Strong** won these vivid Nike x Cactus Plant Flea Market dunks in a raffle. He came to the convention to sell shoes from his collection, which he has built up over about ten years. "Right now I got, like, 40 [pairs of] shoes, and I don't wear them for work, so they're just kind of a collection."

5. **Craft Sutton's** interest in sneakers goes beyond the aesthetic and into the academic, as he said he studies connections between sneakers and Black history. Sutton traveled from southern Virginia to the convention and wore bright-pink Hyperflight DMVs, which pay tribute to DC and feature embroidered cherry blossoms.

6. Another pair of Nikes – this time paying tribute to the Grateful Dead and its connections to Oregon, where Nike is based – were worn by **Matt Latif,** who got into sneakers only about a year ago. "I went from having probably five pairs that you would pick up at Target to over 100 pairs."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY EVY MAGES

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Washington's Most Powerful Women 2026

As we step into a new season as an independent organization, we proudly celebrate Francesca Zambello, whose visionary artistry embodies the spirit of looking forward. As we welcome new ideas, venues, and opportunities, we honor Zambello's enduring impact and her belief in the transformative power of live performance. Brava, Francesca!

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Tail of Woe

Could a University of Maryland prof's new book help a bad greyhound?

I KNEW THAT MY DOG MIGHT BE BAD two days after I brought him home, when he leapt onto my dinner table, stood atop it with all four paws, and began plucking the figs out of a homemade cake. There were other issues, too: chewing the backs of my chairs, freezing on walks, shrieking each time I left him alone. Sigmund is an 80-pound greyhound. He's tough to control. I thought, *What on earth have I done?*

To help me, I arranged for a meeting between Sigmund and **Jen Golbeck.** Golbeck is a professor of information studies at the University of Maryland, but she's also the guardian of six rescued golden retrievers and the author of a new book called *Think Like a Dog*. The book takes the principles of positive psychology—a field that investigates what makes humans feel happy and fulfilled—and applies them to our pets. I thought this might help me manage Sigmund. But Golbeck's ideas turned out to be better at managing me.

When she walked through my door, Golbeck sat on the rug, scratched Sigmund's ears, and explained to me that her book isn't a training manual—it's not about teaching dogs specific behaviors but about how to enable them to live their happiest, fullest lives. "So much dog training is just getting them to stop doing the bad things," she said, but she prioritizes making them feel loved and giving them outlets for their energy and skills. A more spirited dog, for instance, might benefit from a hobby like flyball or agility. An anxious dog might need a comfort object, like a special blanket or toy. And whatever you're doing with your dog, she said, "you want more attention on the happy parts."

Golbeck's philosophy is not so different from gentle parenting. For a long time, she explained, parents "believed that kids should be seen and not heard, and that they should be perfectly obedient." But now parenting norms have shifted to affirming children's emotions and helping nurture their innate interests and gifts. With dogs, Golbeck says, "of course we want them to be obedient, but there's so much more that they can be. Dogs are capable of really sophisticated kinds of fulfillment. Some of that's happy goofiness, and some of it is loyalty and having a sense of purpose. So let's think about how to indulge that when possible."

Admittedly, I was finding it difficult to focus on Sigmund's good qualities while he was barking in my face, which he did for a portion of our interview. "Oh my goodness," Golbeck said to him, moving to the floor and tussling with his hedgehog toy as she talked. I asked if this would reward the barking. "Well," she said, "that's always a concern." But the barking, she reminded me, is actually a sign of love. Did I really want to meet Sigmund's love with anger or annoyance? Instead, she recommended a vibrating anti-bark collar that works on one of her dogs.

Golbeck and her husband "intentionally take sick and traumatized dogs," she said, "and so we're very gentle in our house—like, nobody gets yelled at. Everything is oriented around making them feel safe and good and cared for." She does train them; they know basic commands and respond to their names. She makes them stop when they're being disorderly or unsafe. But she thinks they respond better to praise than correction.

When it was time for Golbeck to leave, she knelt down to say goodbye. "Well, you are a joy, and I love you, and I hope you stop barking," she told Sigmund. She did not mention that he'd just chewed the foot off of his toy duck, and I've been trying to follow her example.

—SYLVIE McNAMARA



Jen Golbeck with some of her rescued golden retrievers

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF JEN GOLBECK

WASHINGTONIAN

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Sharon Marcil,
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ROOM WITH A VIEW

For an unusually quirky overnight stay, try the Canal Quarters program, which restores lockhouses along the C&O and rents them out. Canal Quarters just opened its newest, Lockhouse 8. Here's a look.

THE HISTORY: During the canal's 1870s heyday, mule-powered boats navigated 74 locks, which were tended by lockkeepers living in houses alongside them. Only 26 lockhouses remain today. The C&O Canal Trust launched the Canal Quarters program in 2009, and there are now eight available to stay in.

THE HOUSE: Built in 1830, Lockhouse 8 housed generations of keepers and, briefly, a park ranger in the 1960s. After decades of dormancy, it served as the Potomac Conservancy's River Center in the 2000s but has been empty for years. Each of the Canal Quarters lockhouses captures an era in the canal's history. Lockhouse 8 evokes the 1960s park-ranger period. In the kitchen, chrome chairs upholstered in red vinyl surround a Formica table across from a vintage Hoosier cabinet.

THE STAY: Depending on the season, rates are $90 to $135 a night. (Book at *canaltrust.org*.) The 725-square-foot house has electricity, heat, and room for eight, but it's rustic: Bring your own linens and don't expect wi-fi. There's also (yikes!) no indoor plumbing. Jug water is provided, and outhouses are nearby. —CHELSEY STONE

Fruit of His Labors

How one local gardener got into competitive farming—and broke a state record

IF YOU'VE EVER BEEN TO A STATE FAIR, admired a prize-winning vegetable, and wondered, "Who *grew* that thing?," then you'll be excited—as we were—to meet **Paul Jarosh.** An engineer at a tech company who lives in Culpeper, Jarosh moonlights as a hobbyist farmer, cultivating massive produce on his three and a half acres of land. He's found the most competitive success with his squash, winning the top prize at the Virginia State Fair a few years ago. He'll be competing again this year at the event, held in Doswell in late September and early October.

Jarosh is relatively new to competitive farming, though he's been into gardening since his dad taught him when he was growing up in Pennsylvania. In 2020, he went to the Virginia fair and was struck by the huge veggies on display. He decided to give it a try, and two years later he entered the contest with a gigantic butternut squash. "I did a bunch of stuff wrong," he says of that early effort. "It was just pure luck." Jarosh turned out to be a natural: The 103-pound vegetable didn't just win that year's prize—it broke the all-time state record.

That victory catapulted him into the world of state-fair vegetable competitions and also turned him into something of a local celebrity. This year, Jarosh and his wife, Mary-Ellen, are running the Virginia State Fair weigh-off. They're now part of a thriving community of growers, both locally and across the country, who share tips and tricks with one another. When he got into the sport, Jarosh says it was common for older growers to be fairly guarded—hoping to protect any secret techniques that could give them an edge on a few extra pounds. In the six years since, Jarosh has built a network of friends who share his interest. On his social media, he posts updates on his crops and advice for other gardeners. He just wants more people to have fun experimenting with giant flora, he says.

Competitive growing isn't easy—you might do everything correctly and still lose a fruit to rot, splitting, or wildlife. "You can only do so much to help Mother Nature along," he says. "Quite a bit of it is still in her hands."

This year has apparently been a bit of a mess for a lot of growers due to late-season storms. The excess water wiped out all of Jarosh's giant pumpkins, for example, and he had a split in the 73-pound marrow squash that he'd hoped would set a state record. But he still has a Laguna squash that he believes to be on track for a world record, at more than 200 pounds. "I get enjoyment out of watching everything grow," he says. "I like seeing the smile that giant fruit puts on everyone's face."

—WALKER WHALEN



TOP PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF CANAL TRUST; BOTTOM COURTESY OF PAUL JAROSH

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Cheapest Date in DC?

Frugal boozers are buzzing about a bar where every drink costs $5



TOP PHOTOGRAPH BY JON RUBE

THE IDEA FOR A BAR WHERE EVERY DRINK costs $5 started as a joke. Other spots around U Street had occasional $6 deals. But what if you stripped away the premium liquors, the DJs, and the comfortable furniture, then offered the most basic of basics for the cheapest price possible, all the time?

The result is the new Five Dollar Bar—essentially the Spirit Airlines of bars, and a rare antidote to cocktails casually creeping over $20. "It was literally one of those things of throwing spaghetti at the wall," says co-owner **Jon Rube,** a nightlife veteran who, it turns out, used to be a flight attendant for Spirit Airlines. He and business partner **Shewa Etana** previously operated other bars in the same U Street space, including Hashtag Lounge and Revolt, before coming up with this new concept, which they launched in August. "We tried it, and people started coming in. It started getting picked up by the blogs. So we're like, 'Oh, we might actually have something.' "

To try to make the economics work, Rube says they buy bottles that retail for less than $10. Their rail liquors—a brand called Recipe 21—cost them around $7 to $8 a bottle. Then they often get deals from distributors and find random bottles with deep discounts, such as Fireball Blazin' Apple or a pre-batched Porn Star martini that was 70 percent off. Most of the liquor is available as shots, although the bar has also been using mixers like Harris Teeter colas, because they were on sale, and Sunny-D, because it's way cheaper than actual orange juice. Everything is served out of plastic Costco cups. "People ask for limes and lemons. It's like, this is not a salad bar. This is literally a $5 bar," says Rube, who also runs the LGBTQ+ venue Icon DC.

To draw people in, the bar will occasionally offer some nicer liquor, too. Three bottles of Don Julio disappeared in 32 minutes on a recent Friday night. And while every drink really is $5, the bar does charge a 20-percent auto-gratuity, bringing the tab closer to $6.50 with tax.

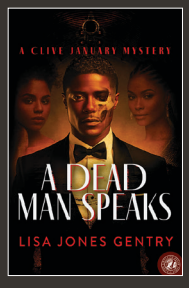
The space has a you-get-what-you-pay-for vibe, with chalk walls to scribble on and fake $5 bills stapled all over the walls and ceiling. Five Dollar Bar has been advertising itself primarily via AI-generated social-media flyers, a practice that's stirred some backlash.

But Rube sees it as one more part of the shtick. "Just like you don't want to pay for a $10 drink, we don't want to pay for a graphic designer, because we can't afford it," he says. "It's $5. What do you expect?"

—JESSICA SIDMAN

FEAR FACTOR

A new bookstore in Alexandria, Long Dark House, focuses on horror and sci-fi, and in addition to classics and new titles, it carries a bunch of scary books by writers who live in our area. We asked owner **Chanthal Harris** for some local-author recommendations.



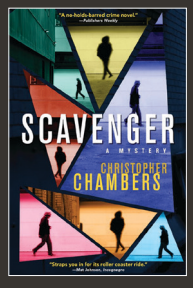
A Dead Man Speaks by Lisa Jones Gentry

A paranormal mystery set in the world of 1980s Wall Street, the book "masterfully blends supernatural suspense, mystery, and emotional storytelling," says Harris.



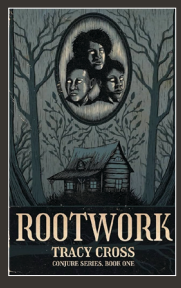
After: An Anatomy of Fracture by Drew Starling

The latest from the DC author of horror and dark fiction follows a motorcycle messenger delivering missives to humanity's last survivors in a postapocalyptic America.



Scavenger by Christopher Chambers

The thriller follows an unhoused man living near the National Museum of Natural History, as he tries his hand as a detective in "a gritty, noir-inspired journey through DC's hidden corners," Harris says.



Rootwork by Tracy A. Cross

Set in 19th-century Louisiana, this Southern Gothic novella traces three sisters' journey into the supernatural, "blending horror with Black folklore and ancestral memory."

– JENNA LEE

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A Line to the Departed

Wind phones offer a sense of connection to lost loved ones

MEERAN TARIQ WAS SCROLLING through Instagram this summer when he saw something about a new "wind phone" in Gaithersburg—a kiosk with a disconnected telephone in it where people can voice unsaid thoughts to loved ones who have died. Tariq immediately thought of his friend **Sean King,** who was hit and killed by a car in Falls Church in June. He and King had known each other for more than a decade and talked almost every day. "I had a lot of things on my mind about what my last words to Sean would [have been]," he says, but "it was so sudden. It was not something we were expecting."

Tariq decided to visit the wind phone, which is housed in a structure that resembles a Little Free Library. A plaque offers instructions: "Pick up the phone, and dial their number, let the wind carry your words." He was moved by the experience. "It was great to have that outlet in a place surrounded by nature, a quiet place to find some solace," he says. "I found that very cathartic, and I would love for it to be something we can dedicate to Sean."

That's what brought Tariq to **Olivia Chao Delfert,** founder of the Little Wind Phone Project, which has so far set up wind phones in Silver Spring and Gaithersburg and is looking to expand throughout the DC area. Tariq reached out to her to ask about the possibility of building a wind phone in Falls Church to honor his late friend.



Delfert didn't invent the wind-phone concept—she came across it while caring for her ailing parents. As she sought ways to channel her emotions, she learned more about the first wind phone, which was built in Japan in 2010. Delfert—who lives in Rockville and works for FEMA—was so drawn to the idea that she experimented with talking into a toy phone of her daughter's. Sharing her feelings in that way felt "profoundly healing," she says.

So Delfert launched the Little Wind Phone Project in 2025 and is now teaming up with community members like Tariq who are seeking to honor loved ones and give others a different way to grieve. The Falls Church project is just one of many in the works. Tariq says they're in the early stages of narrowing down locations and getting the necessary approvals. "I hope we can build that place not just for Sean's loved ones but anyone who has anything to say to a person they have lost," he says. "I think it would serve as a great tool for folks who are grieving not just a recent loss but, years later, making sure you continue to have a space to reflect and say your piece."

—JENNA LEE

PHOTOGRAPH BY AYESHA AHMAD PHOTOGRAPHY





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Guest List

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



Masai Russell

The Bullis grad recently broke the world record for women's 100-meter hurdles.

Kate Greenberg

She runs DC's new pro volleyball team, which announced its name: the DC Flight.

Karen Attiah

An arbitrator sided with the fired *Washington Post* columnist, saying she should get her job back, with back pay.

Jorge Zamanillo

He's director of the National Museum of the American Latino, which announced it'll occupy the Arts and Industries Building.

Lucy McBride

The prominent DC physician has written a new book, *Beyond the Prescription*.

DISINVITED!



Stewart McLaurin

According to the *Post*, the White House Historical Association, which he runs, knew in advance of plans to tear down the East Wing and didn't say anything.

PHOTOGRAPH OF RUSSELL BY NSJSPORT VIA GETTY IMAGES; GREENBERG COURTESY OF DC UNITED; ATTIAH BY DENYS MEAK; ZAMANILLO BY NOAH WILLMAN; MCBRIDE BY JOSEPH TRAN; MCLAURIN BY JOHN LAMPARSKI/GETTY IMAGES FOR CONCORDIA SUMMIT

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Center Field

BEHIND ROWS OF FAMILY HOMES WITH neatly mowed backyards sits this empty brown-dirt lot, marked with tire tracks and piles of felled trees. The scene—photographed in Stone Ridge in August—illustrates a big issue in Northern Virginia, where land is increasingly being cleared out to build data centers, sometimes very close to people's homes. Virginia leads the world in data-center development, which is surging to keep up with the demands of artificial intelligence.

In Loudoun County, where the Stone Ridge facility will be built, data centers fund a third of the county's budget. While this revenue allows for cuts to taxes, residents complain about the constant hum of generators that power the data centers, along with electric-bill increases. For some people who live in Stone Ridge and other parts of the state, it's an issue that's arriving on their doorstep—quite literally.

—HELENA GETAHUN-HAWKINS

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/ AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

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Continental Club VIP Grand Opening Celebration at Union Station

August 19



Salah Czapary of Yala Greek Ice Cream, Rochelle Julich of SHKR and Continental Club, State Department senior adviser Hana Barkett, and Duo Group's Daniel Kramer

The Lounge at Bourbon Steak Media Preview at the Four Seasons Hotel

August 18



Bourbon Steak's Andres Sweek, Quentin Welch, and Engidawork Alebachew



Great Day Washington producer Nora Tarabishi and host Elaine Espinola with the Four Seasons Hotel's Christina Criss



Content creators Donnell Marshall and Natasha Anderson, corporate social-media manager David McCombs, and Morgan Benth of the Four Seasons

DC IndyCar 250 Welcome Reception on the National Mall

August 19



Versus Equity's Vinoda Basnayake, DC mayor Muriel Bowser, and Penske Corporation's Bud Denker



Jennifer Stevenson of the TLEX Institute, Vida Ali of Ben's Chili Bowl, Jason Turner of Verdant DC, and Victor Bonett of Amazon



The Metropolitan Police Department's Jason Bagshaw, Jeffery Carroll, and Joy Lee with Tomás Talamante, director of intergovernmental affairs in the DC mayor's office

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANIEL SWARTZ

Moms Clean Air Force Inaugural "Power of Moms Award" Luncheon at Marcus DC

August 21



Musician Jon Batiste with his mother, 2026 Power of Moms Award honoree Katherine Batiste, and his father, Michael Batiste



Environmental Defense Fund's Margot Brown, Marcus DC's Kellon Maximay, Moms Clean Air Force's Julie Kimmel, and the Morrow Hotel's Anthony Forte



Isabel González Whitaker and Almeta Cooper of Moms Clean Air Force with Elise Nelson Leary of Presidential Innovation Fellows (center)

Our Daughters' Futures Fund "Forever Fearless" Fundraiser at the Square Washington, DC

August 30



Artist Annie Broderick; Girls Inc. DC's Heather Hairston; and Maggie O'Neill and Sally McBratney of Our Daughters' Futures Fund



TTR Sotheby's International Realty's Kayla Vogel and Kimberly Casey, Allison Priebe Montgomery of Queen Bee Designs, and retired Air Force colonel John Montgomery



Usan Usan's Peter Chang, Becky Lee of Becky's Fund, and NBC4's Tommy McFly

FX's *The Drop—A Snowfall Saga* DC Red Carpet at the National Museum of African American History & Culture

September 1



Stars of FX's *The Drop—A Snowfall Saga* Isaiah John, Simmie "Buddy" Sims III, Gail Bean, Peyton Alex Smith, and Asante Blackk



The Drop creator Malcolm Spellman with political commentator Ameshia Cross



Capital City Go-Go assistant coach Jason Thompson and head coach Tevon Saddler

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THINGS TO DO

Our 10 picks for the month in culture

By Pat Padua



MUSIC

RUSH

CAPITAL ONE ARENA

October 25 and 27

The hard-rock greats retired from the road in 2018, and after drummer Neil Peart died in 2020, it seemed unlikely that decision would ever change. But the band is now back on tour, featuring German musician Anika Nilles behind the drum kit, and the intense shows have been wowing fans and critics.

MUSIC

NOSEDA CONDUCTS *EXOTIC TALES*

CENTER FOR THE ARTS AT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

October 1

STRATHMORE

October 2

Following its opening gala in late September, these are the first regular performances of the National Symphony Orchestra in its non–Kennedy Center 2026–27 season. Gianandrea Noseda will lead the musicians through popular works by Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, and Ravel.





MUSEUMS

"ESTHER BUBLEY: PHOTOGRAPHING THE HOMEFRONT"

CAPITAL JEWISH MUSEUM

October 22

The daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants worked for the Office of War Information during World War II, and her photographs vividly captured daily life in wartime Washington.

MUSEUMS

"BEVERLY PEPPER: LAND ART AND MONUMENTAL SCULPTURES"

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS

October 23–April 25

This exhibit features several gallery-size pieces and a film about the American sculptor, known for creating monumental works from iron, steel, and earth. It's complemented by an outdoor exhibition on New York Avenue (right).



PHOTOGRAPH OF RUSH BY GARY MILLER/GETTY IMAGES; NSO BY SCOTT SUCHMAN; "OUTSIDE OF UNION STATION, 1943" COURTESY OF ESTHER BUBLEY ARCHIVE; NEW YORK AVENUE SCULPTURE INSTALLATION BY JASON DIXSON PHOTOGRAPHY/COURTESY OF BEVERLY PEPPER STUDIO AND DOWNTOWN DC BID

DANCE

GO-GO 50

WARNER THEATRE
October 30–November 1
The Washington Ballet opens its 50th season with an eclectic program that, among other things, features the world premiere of a piece boldly marrying ballet to go-go music, including work from the band Black Alley (right).





MUSIC

NILADRI KUMAR

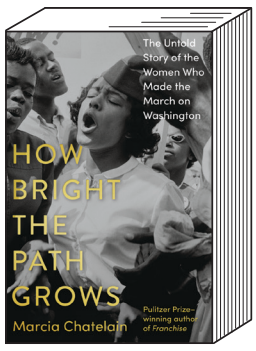
SIXTH & I
October 24
The sitar virtuoso, zitar inventor, and sometime film composer pays homage to the late master Zakir Hussain in a program drawing on both Indian classical music and contemporary jazz.

MUSIC

KELELA

THE FILLMORE
October 13
The Ethiopian American alternative-R&B singer, who grew up in Gaithersburg, is back with *New Avatar,* a gauzy, sonically rich album that casts a spell .





BOOKS

MARCIA CHATELAIN

POLITICS AND PROSE (CONNECTICUT AVENUE)
October 7
The Pulitzer Prize–winning author's latest book, *How Bright the Path Grows,* looks at the women behind the 1963 March on Washington – both well-known figures like Josephine Baker and Mahalia Jackson and lesser-known participants who still had a big impact.

MUSIC

POWER TO THE PEOPLE



MERRIWEATHER POST PAVILION
October 3
This inaugural celebration of "peace, love, justice and music" is an all-star concert featuring Bruce Springsteen (above), Tom Morello, Foo Fighters, Public Enemy, and more.

FILM

NOIR CITY DC

AFI SILVER THEATRE
October 8–22



This year's annual festival of hard-boiled cinema emphasizes crime and song, with classics including *Blues in the Night* (1941), the jazz-inflected *Othello* adaptation *All Night Long* (1962), and what may be Elvis Presley's greatest movie, *King Creole* (1958, above). W

PHOTOGRAPH OF BLACK ALLEY BY DEE DWYER; SPRINGSTEEN BY PAUL MORIGI/GETTY IMAGES; KUMAR COURTESY OF NILADRI KUMAR
ARCHIVES; KELELA BY CHRISTOPHER POLK/*WWD* VIA GETTY IMAGES; *KID CREOLE* COURTESY OF AFI SILVER THEATRE AND CULTURAL CENTER

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IQ

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Should Democrats Be More Surprising?

Former Senate staffer Adam Jentleson thinks his party can reclaim power by being a lot less predictable

By Sylvie McNamara

Photograph by Laura Metzler



ADAM JENTLESON IS THE KIND OF Democrat who believes that winning elections is the party's primary moral imperative—that in order to fight rising authoritarianism and enact an ambitious policy agenda, Democrats first have to crush at the polls. His new book, *Supermajority,* lays out an idea about how to do so: embrace candidates who sometimes buck the party on issues like gun control or fracking, demonstrating independent thought.

It's not new to suggest that Democrats should be more ideologically flexible and less beholden to the demands of progressive interest groups, but Jentleson—a former Senate staffer who spent years as a top aide to Harry Reid—is a particularly vocal combatant in that sphere. Critics think he's trying to push the party to the right; Jentleson thinks he's found the path to the kinds of House and Senate supermajorities that could pass the next Great Society or New Deal. We talked to him about his unusually public resignation from John Fetterman's office in 2024, the purpose of the think tank he subsequently founded, and his theory of how Democrats can win in 2028.

A supermajority requires winning moderate voters, but data suggests that moderate voters aren't centrists. They're not taking the middle position in the left-right binary. Instead, you believe that most moderate voters are "heterodox," which means taking an eclectic mix of positions from different ideological poles.
Heterodoxy is the defining feature of the American voter, especially the swing voters who decide elections. These voters will say, "I think all CEOs who caused the 2007 financial crisis should be thrown in jail," and then, "I also think all immigrants should be deported immediately." Neither of those positions are moderate—they're both pretty extreme—but if you combine them, you have heterodoxy, because they're being drawn from different ideologies.

You argue that heterodox voters like heterodox candidates, which partly accounts for Trump's appeal.
Right. I think Trump is the worst President we've ever had, but he did create this heterodox appeal in 2016 by taking positions that people were surprised to hear from a Republican, like strongly opposing the Iraq War or talking about how people on Wall Street were getting away with murder. Those positions add up to an impression that this person is an independent thinker, so they trust him to make decisions on the merits rather than doing the bidding of interest groups or donors. You cannot get that reputation simply by taking ideologically consistent positions on every single issue, because then you just come across as an ideologue.

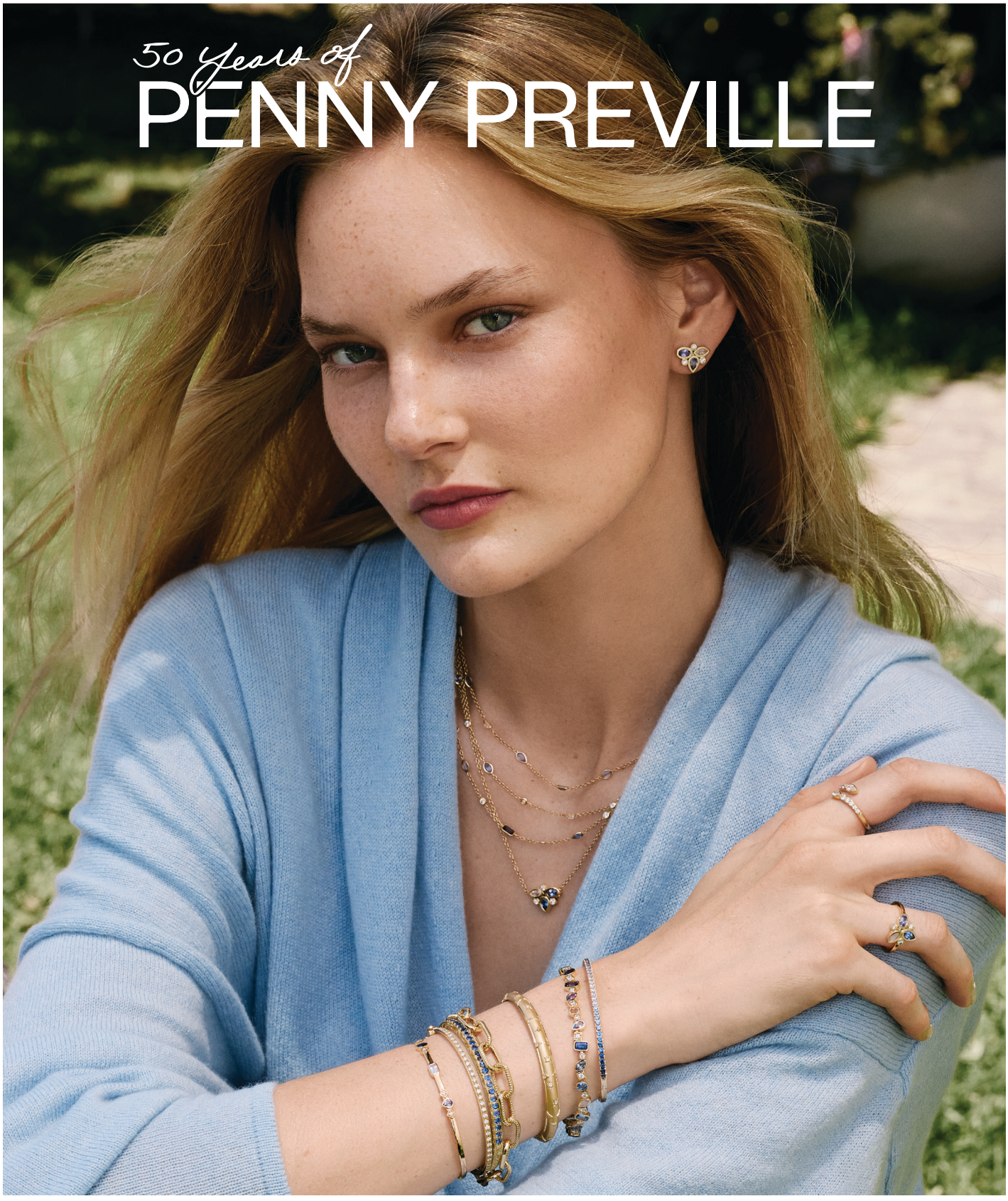
> **"The [Senate] is fundamentally broken and needs massive reform. I will do what I can to help make that possible, but I think I can best advance that cause from the outside."**

You've also praised Democratic politicians like Bernie Sanders and Barack Obama for running heterodox campaigns.
In 2008, Obama took a strong position against the Iraq War and secured the Democratic base—but then he ran to the right of his primary opponents on issues like healthcare. He also [argued] that there should be an increased focus on Black fatherhood, which elicited lots of pushback from the left. Obama succeeded in crafting a supermajority. He won 365 electoral votes and ushered in a Senate majority that hit 60 seats. That's what Democrats need to do. We need to win competitive races. I'm not talking about deep-blue areas of the country. I'm talking about Texas or Ohio or Indiana or the Dakotas—all states where Democrats used to be competitive and can be competitive again if we adopt this heterodox approach.

But was Obama successful because he was heterodox? He was an extremely inspiring candidate. He had an ambitious vision for the country.
Absolutely, but the point is that heterodoxy allows you to appeal to a broader group of people. You're providing access points for people who don't typically vote for Democrats. Some might say, "I like Obama because he wants to enact universal healthcare," and others might say, "I like him because he's got an independent streak and he's willing to stand up to interest groups on the left." Both of those people are right, and this appeal invites all sorts of voters into the big Democratic tent. Heterodoxy is compatible with an inspirational and ambitious view of America—and in a lot of ways, it's a precondition. A rigidly ideological approach is inherently narrower because it's appealing to a smaller set of people.

What drew you to a career in politics?
My opposition to the Iraq War, basically. I grew up in a pretty political family. My dad was a professor, but he was also a foreign-policy adviser to Al Gore. For me, that meant politics was uncool and I didn't want to do it because it was what my parents did. I got a degree in American history and was planning to get a PhD, but I was teaching at a charter school in the Bronx when 9/11 happened. It was a sort of radicalizing experience, watching the Bush administration use that as a pretext to take America into a disastrous war. I realized there wasn't a ton I could do living in New York, so I decided to move to DC. I joined the [2004 John] Kerry campaign and I got the bug.

In 2024, you resigned as John Fetterman's chief of staff and later gave an interview to *New York* magazine describing your concerns about his mental health. It's pretty



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TIES TO THE PAST: Jentleson with Harry Reid in 2013. The author and Searchlight Institute founder once served as deputy chief of staff to the late senator.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MELINA MARA/*WASHINGTON POST* VIA GETTY IMAGES

extraordinary for a staffer to be quoted like that about their boss. I'm curious why you decided to do it.
I struggle with this, because the staffer code is that you keep all of these secrets. But in this case, I thought the public had a right to know that I think he is not well. I was initially tasked with telling the public that he was well enough to do the job, and at that time, I believed that he was. When he was discharged from Walter Reed [after a six-week hospitalization for major depression], he was sticking to the very strict routine that his doctors laid out for him. Then I am convinced that he went off it, and being off it profoundly impaired his judgment and his ability to do the job. *[Fetterman's camp has denied these assertions.]*

We've seen recently what happens when staffers take the staffer code too far and cover for their bosses well beyond the point where transparency is warranted. We saw that with Biden, then with Dianne Feinstein. Working in the Senate and seeing how often

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this happens—where everybody in the building knows these almost open secrets about the health of certain elected representatives—it feels like a scandal that the people who are sending them to office don't know. So the voters in Pennsylvania can do what they want with that information, but I think they deserve to know.

Was that the end of your Senate career?
I hope so. I don't plan to go back.

How come?
The institution is pretty fundamentally broken and needs massive reform. I will do what I can to help make that possible, but I think I can best advance that cause from the outside.

Last year, you founded a think tank, the Searchlight Institute. Why?
I started it because the other half of my career was spent working in nonprofits and think tanks like the Center for American Progress, and I think that space has gotten paralyzed by the rigid ideological thinking that I criticize in my book. What we need is an organization that is not bound by any strict ideology. The mission is to inject heterodoxy into the bloodstream for the 2026 midterms, but the bigger goal is to have it be a concept that governs the 2028 race.

You've described Searchlight as essentially a messaging lab. You poll issues and then try to steer Democrats towards positions that are popular with voters. Is that right?
There's this problem where [interest] groups will never show you any polling that reveals the unpopular aspects of what they want to do. They try to tell you that you're only ever building political capital and you're never spending it. We want to say, "Look, sometimes you build capital with popular positions, and other times you need to spend it on things you care about." Sometimes candidates will have to be out in front of public opinion, trying to shape it. But it's very important to know when you are spending capital.

Trans rights are an example. Searchlight's polling suggests that it might help Democrats to talk about that less.
What our polling essentially shows is that there is actually extremely broad support for most basic civil-rights issues when it comes to the treatment of trans people. There is a solid foundation for building a very aggressive pro-trans agenda. But when you get to some of these narrower issues—kids in sports and medical treatment for minors—there are legitimate questions being raised, and we have to take those seriously. There's no question that when you're dealing with trans issues, the most important thing is to come at it from a compassionate point of view. But Democrats have acquired this reputation of becoming censorious towards people who raise legitimate questions, and that has left them out of step with the American people.



Does taking those questions seriously undermine trans people's civil rights?
I think the worst thing for trans people is for Republicans to win elections. Giving Democratic candidates in red and purple states some leeway on these issues is going to make it more likely that they're able to win. And having Democrats in power ultimately is what's most effective at protecting trans rights.

When you look at the compromises that people made in the past in order to enact the kind of change that we now celebrate—these were gut-wrenching, morally dubious compromises. FDR acquiesced to the demands of white supremacists to cut millions of Black people out of the benefits of many New Deal programs, and he blocked—or at least sat idly by—as anti-lynching legislation failed. Saying that there are legitimate fairness issues on narrow questions of [trans] kids playing sports is not exactly that type of morally dubious compromise. I think it's important to keep that context in mind.

But where do you draw the line? Are there popular positions that Democratic candidates simply shouldn't take?
I think it's: Do you believe in using the power of government to improve the conditions of average Americans, particularly those who are struggling? And do you believe in using the power of government to protect their fundamental civil rights and expand the scope of who we include in the American community? Those basic questions are what make a liberal a liberal, and none of the things that you would adopt as a heterodox position run counter to that. James Talarico in Texas decided that he's going to embrace the oil-and-gas industry because it employs hundreds of thousands of working-class voters. It does not mean that he's not a staunch liberal who will uphold our deepest and most cherished values. Someone like Talarico might not always vote the way you want, but he's still going to vote with Democrats 80 or 90 percent of the time.

So I think a big part of this is taking a step back and focusing on these core values that we all agree on, and being a little bit more forgiving to people who might disagree with us on a handful of issues.

Who is a heterodox 2028 candidate that you'd be excited about?
Going into a primary, I always try to tell myself to keep an open mind. But just evaluating this in terms of heterodoxy, I think somebody like Jon Ossoff is making a powerful appeal based on his opposition to Trump's corruption but is also releasing ads about being tough on crime and breaking up crime rings. That combination of a liberal appeal with a focus on security is certainly a heterodox combination. W

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



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Making the Chef

In his eyebrow-raising memoir, the Inn at Little Washington's Patrick O'Connell reveals surprising details from his past

By Sylvie McNamara

PATRICK O'CONNELL IS THE LORD OF a Virginia hospitality fiefdom that's extraordinarily high-end. The Inn at Little Washington, the Michelin-starred restaurant he founded 48 years ago out of a former garage, is now the anchor of a whimsical snow-globe town that boasts such amenities as a "garden of scents," a manicured walking loop resplendent with llamas and sheep, a sprawling organic garden, and a cupolaed chicken coop with a crystal chandelier. Recently, he referred to Little Washington as a "very happy Never-Never Land" that's "not Disney and not Hollywood—it's just life as it ought to be."

But in his new memoir, *Main, Middle & Gay,* O'Connell reveals the underbelly of his storybook life. He grew up in Clinton, Maryland—a rural tobacco-farming community south of Oxon Hill, which he says was "kind of primitive, lost in time, and not what I'd call very enlightened." He describes a '50s childhood that was ribboned with beauty and terror (sinister nuns, a wrathful father, scrums of bullies who targeted him for being obviously gay), and a '60s young adulthood cavorting among the DC area's gurus and criminals and vagabonds and outcasts while working in local restaurants and clubs. The memoir is eccentric. It's literary and image-heavy, the product of an odd and artistic mind. I talked to O'Connell about some of his early memories—ones that he hasn't discussed much before but that laid the foundation for his life in food.

The Basket of Goodies

For spans of his childhood, O'Connell writes, he "woke up the entire household just before dawn in a screaming panic night after night," convinced that the wolf from *Little Red Riding Hood* was after him. But despite his fear, it was also his favorite fairy tale. He was

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SCOTT SUCHMAN

obsessed. For Halloween, he'd dress as Little Red in a "red crepe paper dress with a flouncy cream-colored ruffle and matching top." Once, he was physically attacked while wearing it–just like Little Red herself–presumably for the costume's effeminacy.

To O'Connell, this fairy tale was an early lesson in the protective power of food. He fixated on Little Red's basket of goodies, which she uses to distract and fend off the wolf. At that time, he felt practically surrounded by wolves, but food was a great source of solace.

"I just loved food in a very different way than the people around me did," he told me. "I think it was the sensuality and the swoon-worthy factor of food. One can sometimes retreat into beauty for healing from any variety of haunting things, terror being one of them." His childhood was difficult and frightening–but when he ate, "it made me feel good all over. I didn't think about anything unpleasant."



FRUIT OF HIS LABORS: O'Connell once had a memorable experience with a pear that "proved to me, once and for all, that food and sex are all one." Years later, he served this pear-shaped dessert at the Inn at Little Washington.

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The Spiritual Sausage

O'Connell grew up in the Catholic Church, where he said "the nuns were full of wicked stories" and "talked a lot about the soul." He became quite eager to visualize his soul, to know what it looked and felt like. Then on a trip to the supermarket, he saw something. "There it was," he writes, "glowing at me under the fluorescent lights in the refrigerated meat case." This object was "the diameter of a beer can, about six inches long, in a slick, shiny white wrapper with tight little twists at each end." The label said GWALTNEY'S BULK COUNTRY SAUSAGE, and he immediately knew that this was exactly what a human soul looked like.

"The size would fit neatly into your chest," O'Connell explained to me, "and it just had a sensual allure that made you want to squeeze it." The tactile aspect was crucial. The soul, he said, could not be made from concrete—it had to be "almost the texture of an organ, like the heart or the liver or the kidneys, because it had to live in the body." From the nuns, O'Connell had gotten the idea that whenever he sinned, God would mark a black X on his soul, which would remain there until he repented. One side of the sausage wrapper was pure white, and he could imagine the X's appearing there every time he sinned and the relief of confessing and then seeing them erased. On each trip to the store, he'd stare at the sausage, doing his best not to touch it or slip it into his pocket.

The Phallic Dessert

O'Connell writes that his mother was not an excellent cook, but she did like to host. Her signature dish—the one she would make for important company—was called "Little Nancy Etticoat in Her White Petticoat." He describes the dish this way in the book: "It was a banana coming straight up through a Dole pineapple ring, surrounded by a chiffonade of iceberg lettuce, with a dollop of Hellman's mayonnaise dripping down the sides—capped off by a Maraschino cherry." This was apparently a reference to an obscure nursery rhyme about a burning candle, but the erect, mayonnaisey banana perhaps most resembled something else. "For a small child whose chin barely reached the table," he writes, that salad had "a rather haunting, larger-than-life aspect to it."

Puritanism, he says, "has done so much damage to American culture, and we have a hard time, I think, allowing ourselves to fully appreciate food."

From the book, I assumed that everyone was in on the joke—that the banana was a winking and irreverent allusion. "No, definitely not," O'Connell told me. "Absolutely not. It was pure innocence." The salad, he explained, reflected a dynamic from that era "between people who were unconscious and people who were conscious." In the 1950s, "you only saw what you allowed yourself to see. We were living a dream, the great American fairy tale; we had swallowed Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, and many other myths along the way. Things weren't questioned." To some degree, O'Connell could see that the Little Nancy salad was funny—but apparently, his whole family and their guests did not. "Nobody ever said, 'You have got to be kidding! This is hysterical,' " he told me. "They just endeavored to look good while they ate it."

The Succulent Pear

After high school, O'Connell earned a drama scholarship to Catholic University. College did not go well. He was an outcast among the tie-wearing masses, an impish and rebellious force. In his freshman English class—the only course he enjoyed—he penned these lines: "Leaves are beginning to make scratchy noises in the gutter as another fall comes to the American college campus. But this one is not quite like all the rest because I'm here and I hate it."

O'Connell, who ultimately dropped out, insists that he has just one happy memory from his short time at Catholic. It was October, and he was walking across a Brookland railroad bridge with a pear that he'd bought at a corner store. "So I was eating this pear," he told me, "and I had become lost and carried away in its incredible succulence, and the juices started to spurt from the pear, and the warm sun was at my back—and then a train came shooting out of nowhere, rumbling, and everything started to shake all at once, and the pear juices were running down my arms to my elbows, and that bridge was vibrating and shaking. Then, unexpectedly, without my doing anything or

thinking about it, a memorable incident occurred": He spontaneously ejaculated. This moment, he said, "proved to me, once and for all, that food and sex were all one."

In the dining room at the Inn, O'Connell will often hear a "big macho guy" remarking that his meal is better than sex. He bristles at that. "It doesn't have to be one or the other," he told me. Puritanism "has done so much damage to American culture, and we have a hard time, I think, allowing ourselves to fully appreciate food." But the pear experience was totally uninhibited, and he wants that for all of his guests.

Finding Bliss

When O'Connell left college, he went to work at a brand-new high-end restaurant called the Three Thieves. It was on Wisconsin Avenue just north of Georgetown, and it was "like nothing I had ever seen before," he said. "It had a tiered dining room and beautiful bronze sculptures set around on the tables. It was tasteful, and the goal was to create an American-feeling grand dining experience." He took to it immediately, reveling in this "living theater" of wealthy and powerful DC. "The high rollers were coming there in droves," he recalled, "and Jimmy Hoffa was one of them. He would often say to me, 'Look, I'll give you $50 if you can tell me how to be as skinny as you are.' "

Previously, O'Connell had worked at a hamburger counter in his hometown—but restaurant work, no matter how elevated the food, "felt like it was a homecoming or something." He loved the outcasts and eccentrics who populated the kitchens, and the wafting aromas of the food. "There was a big separation between the world of the guest and what was going on behind the scenes, and moving in both realms seemed to draw from me all of my interests and talents." Still today, he loves moving between private and public, between underbelly and facade. Finding restaurants, he said, reoriented his life. "I was in a state of complete bliss." W

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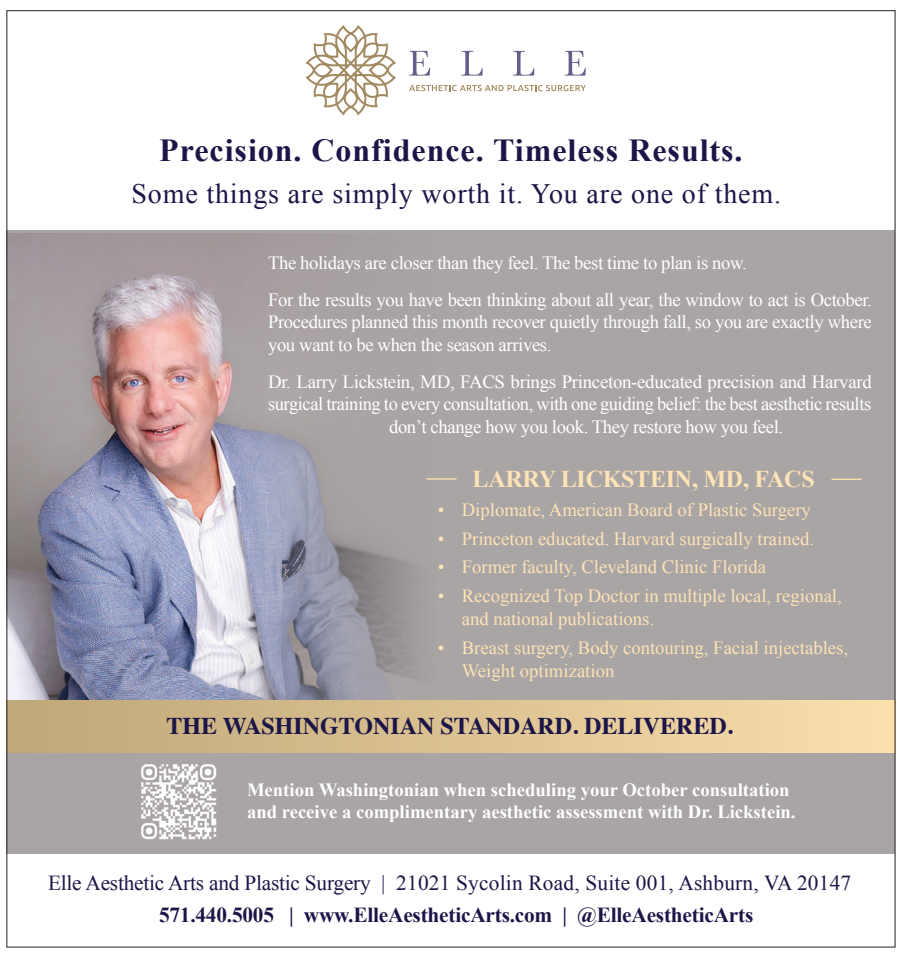




By DANIELLA BYCK, PATRICK HRUBY, REBECCA NORRIS, BRIANA THOMAS, WALKER WHALEN, and ANDREW ZALESKI

Photo-illustrations by DAN PAGE

WANT A FRIEND IN WASHINGTON?

Social isolation is a national public-health epidemic—and DC, which has been called "America's loneliest city," is hardly immune. Here's how to make the connections you might be missing.

AN OLD ADAGE HOLDS THAT IF YOU WANT a friend in Washington, you're best off getting a dog. Often (and incorrectly!) attributed to President Truman, the saying gets at the tenuous nature of political relationships—and also a deeper truth about everyday life in the nation's capital.

Namely, living here can sometimes be awfully lonely.

Two years ago, the product-research firm Chamber of Commerce declared the District to be "America's loneliest city," a ranking rooted in a single metric: 48.6 percent of our households consist of one person, the highest number in the nation. While that arguably isn't enough to label DC as Lonelytown, USA, it's not a stretch to say this is a place where it's easy to feel socially disconnected.

After all, we're a city of ambitious transplants and coming-and-going strivers. Of people more likely to ask What You Do than to learn about Who You Are. Of workaholic news junkies perpetually checking our phones for the next big scoop or five-alarm billable-hours inbox fire. From our offices to our happy hours to rush hour on the Red Line, we're continually surrounded by people yet too often emotionally alone.

This can be a problem. In recent years, experts have been sounding the alarm about the deleterious effects of disconnection—in fact, former surgeon general Vivek Murthy declared loneliness to be a national public-health epidemic, linking it to greater risk of mental-health issues, physical diseases, and even death. (Studies suggest the mortality impact of social disconnection is similar to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.) In response, lawmakers on Capitol Hill have introduced legislation aimed at addressing the problem.

But what about in your own life? If you're feeling isolated or alone at times, this section can help. Inside, you'll learn more about where to meet people, how to find professional help, and even how to make your solo time more enriching. You can always get a dog, too—but thankfully, there are plenty of other ways for Washingtonians to connect.



GETTING CONNECTED

Feeling socially isolated, our writer set out to make new friends—and to better understand how we end up lonely in the first place

LOOK FOR THE T-SHIRT. I'D RECEIVED THAT instruction about a week before, from Chris Costello, a 27-year-old with an easy gaze—a fact I hadn't yet discovered because we hadn't yet met.

Costello is one of the directors of Dudes in the District, a local group that's been around since 2024 and organizes events for, well, dudes. Think movie nights. Gatherings at Nationals games. A rotating restaurant club. Monthly happy hours. I discovered them through a quick Google search and set my sights on a happy hour at the end of July. I'd like to tell you I went strictly as a journalist, the better to deliver the story you're reading.

But, really, I'd been dealing for a while with a weird sense of unease.

I work from home alone, a lot, which comes with being a freelance writer. Blessed are the moments when I travel on assignment and experience what journalism legend H.L. Mencken famously described as the "life of kings," parachuting into places I never would have seen otherwise and chatting up true characters: Montana ranchers who hunt dinosaur fossils, competitive lumberjacks in West Virginia, men and women learning to fix Rolex watches at a school in Dallas. But these encounters are fleeting—good for a quick contact high, long faded by the time my byline appears on a story. Most days, I'm cocooned in the quiet of my office in Silver Spring, fingers on the keyboard, the occasional email or phone call my only contact with the outside world.

This left me feeling isolated in a way I couldn't shake. Thing is, I'm lucky. I have a wonderful, loving wife. I come from a large

PHOTOGRAPHS IN PHOTO-ILLUSTRATIONS BY GETTY IMAGES

and entertaining family, rich in character, jokes, and unabashed opinions. (My mother is 100 percent Italian. If you know, you know.) My wife and I have two good friends we travel with every year. I have a bona fide best friend, too, a buddy in Pennsylvania I've known since freshman year of college—even now, despite being in our late thirties, we still manage to get together every year for a long weekend of just hanging out, a couple guys being dudes, assisted by a fridge amply stocked with Miller High Life.

But around Washington? I don't really have any friends, at least not any I've made on my own. Slowly, a sense of social disconnection had wormed its way into my life. It turns out this isn't unusual: More than half of all Americans say they feel lonely often or some of the time, and an analysis of US Census data led the product-research firm Chamber of Commerce to name DC the "loneliest city in America" in 2023 and 2024.

Still, it bothered me. How had this happened? What could I do about it? Searching for answers, I found myself strolling along 14th Street on the last Wednesday of July, headed for Aslin Beer Company. Walking into the outdoor beer garden, I saw groups of people—strangers—assembled at picnic tables. Then I spotted it: a white T-shirt with a DUDES IN THE DISTRICT logo.

"Chris?" I asked the lone guy sitting at a table in the back.

"No. I'm Will," he replied.

That's how it started. Two guys chatting over beers turned into six, then 12, then pretty soon there were two dozen of us standing around trading handshakes and stories. For the first time in a long time, I felt like a kid on the playground, where you can simply bump into someone and become friends. Eventually, I met Costello, who summed up why we were all here.

"It's very easy to isolate, to do your own thing and just be a bit of a loner," he said. "But this group kind of forces that out of you."

ALONE, TOGETHER

A LOT OF US ARE DOING OUR OWN THINGS—to a fault. That 50-plus percent of Americans who feel lonely some of the time? They're arguably drowning in meaningful human contact compared with the more than one-fifth of adults who say they *always* feel socially isolated.

Everywhere you look, you see signs of our Great Disconnection: declining participation in faith communities, increasingly fragmented civic organizations, less neighborhood engagement. We're all bowling alone, to borrow the argot of political scientist Robert Putnam—even if we're not actually bowling. According to the American Time Use Survey, the average person spends about five and a half hours a day by themselves. The latest census data shows that about 38 million Americans live alone. Generation Z, in particular, is acutely alone: According to the federal government's American Time Use Survey, a tenth of people between 23 and 29 have no face-to-face interactions with anyone on a daily basis.

More than half of Americans say they feel lonely often or some of the time, and more than one-fifth of adults say they *always* feel socially isolated.

Smaller families. Fewer marriages. Feeling overworked and overwhelmed. A decline of so-called "third places" for socializing. A culture that venerates rugged individualism. Streaming and scrolling on our damn phones. All of these are likely culprits in atomizing society. Enforced separation during the pandemic made already lonely Americans feel even more distant. But the causes of all this remoteness may not matter as much as how it affects us—which is to say, very badly. "This isn't some mushy issue," says Andrew MacPherson, chair of the Foundation for Social Connection Action Network, a DC nonprofit that advocates for federal policy to address loneliness. "This is a really serious issue that affects our health."

Research has connected social isolation to greater risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke; depression and anxiety; dementia; and even premature death. Some studies indicate that loneliness has just as negative an impact on our mortality as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Three years ago, then-surgeon general Vivek Murthy declared loneliness to be a national public-health epidemic. In an 82-page report, Murthy marshaled evidence showing that loneliness accelerates cognitive decline in older Americans, that the share of US teens online "almost constantly" has doubled over the last ten years, that only one in six Americans feel connected to their local communities. He followed up with an opinion piece in the *New York Times* recounting his own difficulties with loneliness—how during his first stint in the job, under President Obama, he became so preoccupied with work that he neglected his friendships, only to feel isolated and ashamed to reach out to others after his tenure ended.

On a friend's advice, Murthy began calling old buddies, apologizing for not being in touch and expressing genuine curiosity about how they were doing. "Not only was I blessed to have friends who welcomed me back," he says, "but I came to realize that many of them were also struggling with a sense of loneliness and isolation." Since leaving government, he's started the Together Project, a nonprofit working to further social-connection research and build a deeper sense of community.

"It's one of the great challenges facing our generation," Murthy says of loneliness. "And I think it will be a drain on future generations if we're not able to figure out how to create a more connected society."

DISCONNECTED IN THE DISTRICT

MY JOB IS ALL ABOUT TALKING TO PEOPLE, which is something I've always enjoyed. I can make conversation in an elevator. I don't mind if you start talking to me at the bar in the airport terminal—hell, I'll buy you a drink.

In Washington, though, I was lost.

When I lived in Baltimore, the same city where I attended college, I knew others who had stuck around after graduation. When I moved to Philadelphia a few years later, I had my future wife and a network of friends from high school and work. But when my wife and I subsequently relocated to the DC suburbs for her teaching job—well, things were different.

Our area is famously transient, a place where the cyclical nature of politics and power has some people perpetually coming and going, in with one election and out with another. When the Chamber of Commerce ranked DC as America's loneliest city, it

did so by looking at the percentage of one-person households: 48.6 percent, tops in the nation, and greater than Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York. (For the percentage of men living alone, the District ranked number three, behind St. Louis and Cleveland. For the percentage of women, it ranked second, behind Alexandria.)

I wasn't living by myself when I arrived in Washington. But I was 27 and working for myself, by myself. All the opportunities I'd once had to easily meet up with friends were gone. No more quick texts or short walks to the neighborhood dive bar. No more phone calls to people who lived close by.

This came as a bit of a surprise. I wanted to make new friends here, but I had no idea how to go about it. For adults, this is a distressingly common experience. "I think a lot of people rely on this assumption they had when they were kids, that it'll just happen for me, and realize that it doesn't," says Marisa Franco, a psychologist and professor at the University of Maryland.

Franco studies platonic relationships—in fact, she wrote the book *Platonic*, which explores how people can form lasting friendships. "In adulthood, you have to make an effort," she says. "You have to go to places where you can connect with people." Franco calls this "mere exposure." Put yourself in social situations around new people and it's more likely you'll find new pals. "That's what friendship requires," she says. "It's not just some sort of magic."

Point taken—except for all the ways modern adult life stymies that kind of exposure. It takes time to tend to kids, work, errands, chores. My lawn isn't going to mow itself. No one's building that shed but me. And I won't have money for either if I don't write this article.

Still, I tried to make the magic happen. Beginning in 2025, I hosted the occasional Scotch night at my house but suspended it indefinitely after the last three this year went unattended. The bottles I'd purchased didn't go to waste, but I was the only one drinking them. (I've since been assured by invitees that their no-shows weren't because I'm disliked. I'm not the only person with a busy adult life.)

And even if my ill-fated gatherings had been a little less so, there's no guarantee that exposure alone would have produced actual connection. After all, it's not enough to be physically present with others—we need to be mentally there, too. And that can be hard, especially in the smartphone era. Who doesn't have a habit of checking their feed, their inbox, their texts? Thinking about work or sports or picking up the kids? Answering one last email because we're always available as long as there's wi-fi?

Murthy has struggled with being perpetually plugged in. He first realized something was amiss after he and his wife had their first child. "We were doing the nighttime routine—dinner, bath, all of that," he recalls. "And in the midst of that, my hand stuck in my pocket, I pull out my phone."

Murthy's wife asked him if he really

THE LONELINESS TEST

The UCLA Loneliness Scale can be a useful first step toward determining if you have a problem with social isolation

Are you lonely? A short test might reveal the answer. The UCLA Loneliness Scale was developed in the 1970s to measure social isolation. Revised over time for greater clarity and reliability, it asks 20 questions related to how often people feel disconnected from others. Among them:

- ↪ How often do you feel alone?
- ↪ How often do you feel that your interests and ideas are not shared by those around you?
- ↪ How often do you feel that your relationships with others are not meaningful?
- ↪ How often do you feel that people are around you but not with you?

For each question, test takers are asked to choose one of four answers, each with a corresponding point value: never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), and often (4). The test is scored by adding up the points for all the answers. A score between 20 and 34 is considered to indicate a low level of loneliness, while higher scores are considered to indicate increasingly greater levels.

The UCLA scale and similar measures are far from perfect: They rely on self-reporting, and someone who scores high because they feel lonely on a certain day or during a particular month may not feel the same the next month or year.



Still, studies have shown that people with high scores on the UCLA scale have worse friendships and romantic relationships than people with lower scores, and the test can serve as a useful preliminary screening tool. Some medical organizations use a shortened form of it for that purpose, posing just three questions: How often do you feel that you lack companionship? How often do you feel left out? How often do you feel isolated from others? By itself, the UCLA scale can't determine whether you have a serious problem with social disconnection. But it can offer an important hint.

You can take the UCLA test for free at ***psytests.org/ipl/uclaen.html.***

PHOTOGRAPH BY RETHA FERGUSON/PEXELS



needed to be looking at his device. "I felt ashamed, actually," he says. "I'm literally just refreshing my inbox to see if there's anything new. And that mindless checking of our phone . . . that's something I certainly experienced and that I still have to manage to this day."

Franco, the Maryland professor who studies friendship, has a term for this kind of behavior: "covert avoidance." It helps explain how we can feel alone even when we're in the same room with others. Now, Murthy says, he carves out "sacred spaces" where he forgets about the phone. At dinnertime, all family members have to put their devices away.

And that's not the only way we can be unwitting architects of our own isolation. Franco says our brains are "really designed for safety—to not make us risk harm." That's a good thing if it helps you avoid dark alleys late at night. But it's not so helpful if it's shielding you from people out of fear of rejection. Subconsciously, Franco says, the human mind develops lots of excuses to keep others at emotional arm's length.

One of these is something psychologists call "the liking gap." All the time, people underestimate how well liked they are, even by complete strangers. (According to Franco, nine times out of ten, someone we don't know will talk to us—and even enjoy the experience.) This can make it hard to connect. So can that classic DC question, the one heard at dinners and cocktail parties and even on first dates, the one that can leave you feeling as sized up as a car on a sales lot: *So what do you do for work?*

Studies suggest the mortality impact of social disconnection is similar to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.

"I think people come here and they are very ambitious," says Joshua Cogan, a 50-year-old photographer who's spent the bulk of his professional life in DC. "But with ambition, we start to objectify ourselves and we objectify each other. We see each other as means to an end a lot of times."

I reached out to Cogan because he's the founder of Journeymen, a nonprofit that began as a meditation group in the city and has since grown into a national organization that seeks to bring together groups of men on retreats, adventures, and monthly online calls. Like the guys of Dudes in the District, participants are looking for community and belonging, friendships that transcend online life. "I think the more we become avatars to each other, the less human we become," Cogan told me. "There is something to be said about really just being in physical form with each other. We got to see each other, dude."

We got to see each other. Turning that over in my head, I realized Cogan was correct in more ways than one. To overcome social isolation, we literally have to see each other. But we also need to feel emotionally seen. Meet up, yes. But also form and strengthen meaningful bonds. That kind of connection, I realized, was what I'd been missing. To find it, I'd have to reach out.

LOST AND FOUND

WHEN I MET COSTELLO AT MY FIRST DUDES in the District happy hour, I discovered we had much in common. Like me, he had moved from Philadelphia to DC for work–and like me, he felt an unwanted Fortress of Solitude growing around him. "I found myself just sitting in my apartment all day and not knowing what to do outside of that," he told me. "Honestly, I think this group was what I needed."

For his first event, Costello and about ten others went to a movie theater in Chinatown to watch *Deadpool & Wolverine*. "Usually, you don't get nervous going to something like that," he says. "But I was like, 'Oh, man, who are these people? These guys could be super weird.' " That's not how the night went. Everyone, he says, was "super cool" and "really nice." There's a simple charm to just going to the movies with friends, and the group still has a few photos they took from the event–shared on Discord so people can more easily attach names to faces.

If a group of bros checking out the first R-rated movie officially set in the Marvel Cinematic Universe sounds like an extremely male way of addressing the loneliness epidemic, maybe it's because said epidemic has some particularly male elements. According to a report from the American Institute for Boys and Men, men are more likely than women to report feelings of disconnection or thinking they're "not meaningfully part of any group [or] community"–and also tend to find fellowship by engaging in group activities. "Men will more often get into conversation when they're shoulder-to-shoulder doing something," Murthy says. "And these places where men can gather and share space with each other, be honest with each other about what they're going through, and support each other–I think that's absolutely vital."

> "People would be huddled in little groups, sharing phone numbers, sharing Instagrams. These connections that you can make are definitely life-changing."

Of course, women are looking to connect, too–in fact, Dudes in the District is something of an offshoot of City Girls DC, a group Abigail Smith Judstra started in 2022. Judstra began by hosting walking groups. At the first one, eight women met up with her at the National Mall. By the third, there were 130 walkers.

"After the walks, people would be huddled in little groups, sharing phone numbers, sharing Instagrams," Judstra says. "These connections that you can make are definitely life-changing, and I've experienced that directly." She isn't exaggerating: Through the group, Judstra met one friend who helped her find a job in healthcare policy and another, now one of her best friends, who officiated her 2023 wedding.

Dudes in the District formed after a few of the City Girls suggested that their boyfriends start a group. Today, the group's Discord channel has about 1,500 registered members. Sadly, that number hints at the extent of our loneliness problem–but on the other hand, it all but guarantees that if you show up at an outing, you won't be drinking Scotch alone. Arriving for my first happy hour, I was initially a bit nervous. I felt the



fear that comes with meeting strangers, wondering how you might be perceived or judged or valued. But it was easy to fall into the rhythm of the evening. Everyone was friendly, whether they knew each other or were meeting for the first time. Before long, I was just another dude, bantering away about basketball star LeBron James choosing to join the Philadelphia 76ers, a move that may (or may not) finally end my beloved Sixers' annual practice of ripping my still-beating heart from my chest.

I was energized. This felt good. About two weeks later, I went to another meetup—this time at Kingfisher on 14th Street, for Tuesday-night trivia. Mistiming my Metro ride, I got there almost a full hour early. Fortunately, three dudes were already there. One of them was wearing the group's T-shirt, which features a drawing of the Capitol building and DUDES IN THE DISTRICT on the back. On the front is the phrase LET'S CHANGE THAT, a nod to what the group is trying to do for loneliness.

By 8 PM, there were 18 District Dudes in the bar, enough for three six-man teams. Our squad huddled in a corner tackling questions. One of my teammates, Christian, answered eight of nine correctly during the music round. Another, Jake, seemed to be auditioning for *Jeopardy!* My contribution was more modest: I knew that "pistachios" was the answer to a question about food brand names, surely making the Jesuits behind my expensive education proud. In the end, we were no match for the winning team, who called themselves the Fantastic 4Skins. I'm not sure how the Jesuits would feel about that.

The next morning, as I sat down at my desk with a cup of coffee and began another solitary workday, I thought back on the outing. It was just trivia. But I had talked to strangers, been fully in the moment with the guys around me, used my phone to register our trivia answers instead of checking my email. I had fun, dude. *We* had fun. Logging onto the Discord channel to see what events were coming up next, I remembered something Costello had said to me a few weeks earlier: People could be cooped up all day, working, all by themselves, not getting out to socialize. "So what do you do after work?" he asked me. "You got to find your own little community."

Contributing writer Andrew Zaleski covers science, technology, and business. He wrote about hostage negotiator Mickey Bergman in the June issue.

THE LONELIEST NUMBERS

Facts and figures of social disconnection

48.6%

Percentage of one-person households in DC in 2024, the highest of any US city

Source: Chamber of Commerce analysis of US Census data

A closer look at the decline of social connection in the US between 2003 and 2020:

Time spent alone each month:	+24 hours
Time spent engaging with friends each month:	-24 hours
Time spent engaging with household family:	-5 hours
Time spent engaging with non-household family:	-6.5 hours
Time spent socially engaged with others:	-10 hours

Source: US Surgeon General's Report on Loneliness and Isolation

22%

Percentage of US adults who say they often or always feel lonely, left out, or isolated, or that they lack companionship

Source: KFF International Survey of Loneliness and Social Isolation

49%

Percentage of Americans in 2021 who reported having three or fewer close friends

Source: US Surgeon General's Report on Loneliness and Isolation

A 2024 national survey asked Americans to identify some of the leading causes of loneliness in their lives:

- **73%** Technology
- **66%** Insufficient family time
- **62%** Overworked/ too busy or tired
- **60%** Mental-health challenges
- **58%** Society is too individualistic
- **50%** No religious or spiritual life
- **50%** Remote/hybrid work

Source: Harvard Graduate School of Education

Research suggests that loneliness and social isolation increase the risk of:

- **HEART ATTACK AND STROKE**
- **HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE**
- **DIABETES**
- **INFECTIOUS DISEASE**
- **DEMENTIA**
- **DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, AND SUICIDALITY**

Source: US Surgeon General's Report on Loneliness and Isolation

37,000,000

Number of Americans living alone in 2024

Source: US Census Bureau

WHERE TO MEET PEOPLE

Whether you're new in town or looking to expand your circle, bonding over a shared interest is a tried-and-true strategy for making friends. Here are more than 25 places to convene with kindred spirits.



→ *The Dinner Table Club*

Foodies

The **Dinner Table Club** hosts family-style meals at restaurants such as Cucina Morini and Love, Makoto. Diners rotate seats between courses, sharing dishes and conversation ($80 to $120). The social club **New Friends, Old Strangers**—the brainchild of food-and-lifestyle influencers Zuleika Bouzeid and Petal Mcdonald—connects people via luxe picnics and cocktail game nights. Gastronomes can attend progressive brunches and dinners with every course at a different eatery ($40 annual membership).

Social Dancers

On **Firehouse Fridays,** dance enthusiasts flood Penn Social for line-dance lessons and DJ jam sessions that run past midnight ($15). The LGBTQ+ line-dancing crew **DC Rawhides** brings country-western energy to the bars North Hall, Pitchers, and Trade. Don your cowboy boots and two-step the night away with a new dance partner ($10 donation recommended). With **Gottaswing,** newcomers of all ages can spin, slide, and dip at venues across the DC area ($20 to $30).

Cyclists

Pedal about ten miles of city streets after dark with **We Ride DC.** These social routes are challenging, but beginners are welcome; on some nights you can wave glow sticks (free). The cycling squad **DC Bike Party** brings a thumping playlist and great vibes to their explorations. Enjoy themed rides such as a '90s costume contest, plus post-ride meetups (free).



→ *We Ride DC*



→ *Dog Daze Social Club*

Dog Owners

The dog-friendly Logan Circle drinks garden and restaurant **Dog Daze Social Club** links four-legged friends and their humans for mingling and snacks. The laid-back eatery hosts a rotating schedule of entertainment so you can add bingo and F1 watch parties to your social calendar without leaving the dog at home. Outside of official programming, share a picnic table—and slices of thin-crust pizza—with a fellow dog parent while your pup plays nearby (garden entry starting at $10 per dog).

Hikers

Nature-loving locals have communed at **Capital Hiking Club** for nearly 90 years. Take a Saturday-morning bus trip to trails, waterfalls, and beaches beyond the DC area, then get to know your hike-mates over refreshments (prices vary). Or end the workday at **Hike and Happy Hour,** a brisk three-to-four-mile walk through DC or Arlington followed by a meetup at a bar, rooftop, or beer garden (free). New to

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF SOCIAL GROUPS

trekking? The **Hike Crew** plans social adventures for all levels. From family-friendly treks and cookouts to guided walks through Rock Creek and Anacostia parks, there's space to converse and groove to a curated trail playlist (prices vary).

Cinephiles

Take a break from binging Netflix and go to a local theater to enjoy a movie with **DC Movie Club,** a group of like-minded cinema buffs. Whether you're into horror, comedy, or drama, these gatherings include screenings, happy hours, trivia, and small-group conversations, so you can chat about favorite scenes, debate the best performances, and perhaps meet a film pal to swap Letterboxd reviews (movie ticket prices vary).

Mahjong Players

On Tuesdays, we play mahjong. Learn the basics and history of the trending 19th-century tile game in a friendly atmosphere at DC's **Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library.** After an intro lesson, test your winner's luck in a round of American- or Hong Kong-style play. It's a popular weekly event where you're bound to run into people again if you attend regularly (free).



→ *Mahjong at MLK Library*

PHOTOGRAPH OF MAHJONG BY EVY MAGES

Gamers

Nerd out at a Pokémon tournament, trade Magic: The Gathering cards, or challenge other attendees to classic and modern board games during game nights at **Labyrinth Games & Puzzles.** The playful Capitol Hill game store hosts frequent events for players of all levels (prices vary). Roll the dice on new friendships with **DMV D&D,** a group that organizes happy hours for Dungeons & Dragons players at Quincy Hall in Arlington, Andy's Pizza NoMa, and Crooked Run Fermentation near Union Market (free).



→ *DC Movie Club*

Volunteers

Spend weekends volunteering with **Rock Creek Conservancy.** During the two-hour shift, you'll remove invasive plants, giving native greenery and flowers room to thrive. Bring water, sturdy closed-toe shoes, and layered clothing. There's a high return rate on fellow weed warriors (free; registration required).

Runners

Run clubs typically feature a consistent group looking to socialize while they sweat. Find your cardio bestie at one of **District Running Collective's** fun neighborhood runs, which typically kick off at Union Market on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings (free). At **Pacers Social,** you don't have to exercise alone: Choose your pace and then walk, jog, or run at community workouts across DC and Northern Virginia. There are three-to-six-mile routes or low-pressure, two-mile walks to help you get active with good company (free).

Bookworms

Social by nature, book clubs are a great way to interact with fellow readers. Your neighborhood indie shop likely has a few options across genres. Alexandria's romance bookstore, **Friends to Lovers,** has a group dedicated to sporty liaisons such as *Heated Rivalry* while Chilly P's at **East City Bookshop** is for readers in their twenties and thirties. You can even combine interests: **Solid State Books** hosts a Knits 'n' Yarns book club at the H Street location, where you can bring a bring a fiber-arts project to work on while discussing books.



→ *Pacers Social*



→ Capital Hill Arts Workshop

Creatives

Located in a stately brick house, **Capitol Hill Arts Workshop** offers a variety of adult art classes in a cozy environment. Bond with a small group while learning a new skill—painting, photography, ceramics, and more—over the course of a few weeks (prices vary).

Linguaphiles

At **DC Language and Cultural Exchange Club,** grab a name tag, note the language you speak or want to practice—French, Italian, German, Spanish, Portuguese, or Korean, among many others—then chat over food and drinks at Lucky Bar or atop Navy Yard's Homewood Suites. These buzzy gatherings fill up fast (free; food or drink purchase required). For budding Francophones, the **Northern Virginia French Language Meetup Group** gathers at the Reston cafe La Madeleine every other week to engage in casual conversation (free; food or drink purchase required).

Gen X

Social butterflies in their forties and fifties can check out the **40s and Up Going Out Group.** Dance bachata or say cheers with a MerTini—the meetup's signature cocktail—at socials (free; food or drink purchase required). Meanwhile, there's no age limit on making friends at **MoCo Active & Social** (50+). Meet an easygoing group of single and married folks in Montgomery County for cooking classes, kayaking, service projects, and other activities ($12 membership fee).

GET TOGETHER

For these social groups, sparking connection isn't just a happy byproduct—it's the main goal



CITY GIRLS DC

Inspired by 2020's viral "hot girl walk"—an outdoor walking routine centered on women's empowerment—City Girls DC turns strolling into a way to make new friends. The women's social club leads weekend walks across neighborhoods such as Capitol Hill, Rosslyn, and Navy Yard and hosts happy hours, ice-cream socials, sunrise fitness classes, jewelry-making meetups, and more. If you don't see a hobby that interests you on the calendar, pop into the Discord community group chat, with more than 15,000 members. There you can locate smaller groups based on your age, interests, or where you live, so you can find your crew with ease (free to become a member).



FRIENDS.IN

If you need a break from adulting, check out Friends.In's calendar (@friends.in_ on Instagram). Here, introverts and newcomers can find low-pressure ways to make intentional connections and possibly spark new friendships. Influencer Onose Ijewere curates playful, wellness-focused events so you can escape the day-to-day grind and tap into your inner child—at, for example, a laid-back pajama dance party, an outdoor hula-hoop session, or a community tennis match. Connection cards offer conversation prompts at most events, so you can swap ideas and thoughts with someone new (prices vary based on the event).



SOMETHING DIFFERENT DC

Cofounded two years ago by Prince George's County native Chance Albury, Something Different DC gives locals an alternative to clubbing and partying. What began as an escape-room gathering has grown into a lively community where gamers, trivia whizzes, and people seeking connections attend nostalgic game meetups: Name That Tune bingo, Uno tournaments, and *Amazing Race*–inspired competitions on the National Mall. The events are geared toward interaction and inclusion, so arriving solo isn't out of the norm. At the most popular social outing, Unpopular Opinion, attendees are seated with strangers and chat—or debate—crowd-submitted presentations that announce quirky thoughts and hot takes on pop culture, politics, music, and more. The joyful night out returns to the DC area in November, so sign up before it sells out (prices vary based on event).

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF SOCIAL GROUPS



HOW THEY MET

Readers share their friendship meet-cutes

"It was a Facebook group for women in the DMV making new friends. You post a picture of yourself and write a prompt with things you're interested in. Originally, it was this really big dopamine fix, but then it became a little bit daunting with responding to everyone. Exchanging Instagrams was a little easier to navigate. She swiped up on my story and said, 'Let's do brunch.' Once we had that in-person connection, it became a lot more seamless and effortless. We've been friends for a little over a year now."

—ROMY, DC

"It was Gallery Place or Metro Center, but I saw this guy in an Arsenal jersey, and we had just had this big win. I said, 'Come on, you gunners' or 'Up Arsenal.' Our trains were taking a while, so he stopped and he's like, 'Wait, are you an Arsenal fan?' I was like, 'Of course, I love Arsenal.' So we kind of quickly exchanged information, and we've kept connected through Instagram but also meeting in person for games. I know in DC as an adult it can be hard to branch out and make friends, but that's the power of Arsenal, I guess."

—SAMANTHA, DC

"I've met a few people through Facebook Marketplace. My wife and I tend to clear out our place a lot because we live in a one-bedroom. There was one guy, I sold him a 35-millimeter camera. He was new to the area, so he was keen to connect with other people interested in film photography. We had a ten-minute talk down at our lobby, going through the camera, but also my camera collection and what I've shot with in the past. We exchanged Instagrams and kept connected. We send memes here and there and photo-shoot inspo as well. During the spring, we met up to take photos of the cherry blossoms."

—KELVIN, Arlington

TOP LEFT PHOTOGRAPH BY ANA KAROTKAYA PHOTOGRAPHY; TOP RIGHT BY GETTY IMAGES



IF YOU NEED MORE HELP

Overwhelmed by feelings of loneliness? You may want to talk to a professional. Finding a therapist that's right for you can be its own challenge, but these clinician-approved tips are a great place to start.

BETWEEN AVAILABILITY, INSURANCE coverage, and general compatibility, finding a therapist is no easy feat. According to the American Psychological Association, while the therapist shortage lessened in 2025, roughly half of surveyed practitioners reported having no openings for new patients.

As if waitlists aren't frustrating enough, insurance acceptance (or a lack thereof) adds another hurdle. The APA reports that 38 percent of therapists don't take any insurance, and of those who do, only 55 percent accept private or commercial insurance.

Despite the prevalence of mental-health issues—nearly 1 in 10 adults in the US reported a mental-health crisis in 2025, with roughly 57.3 million receiving mental-health treatment last year—barriers to finding care remain. Struggling to find someone to talk to? Here are tips for finding the right therapist, straight from the therapists themselves.

Be Honest About Your Needs

Columbia Heights therapist Alban Zamora says being candid with yourself about where you're struggling can help lead you to the right professional. While you may not know if your symptoms are signs of OCD or complex PTSD, you likely can determine whether you've been feeling stressed, anxious, or depressed or if you're battling poor body image or disordered eating—all common filters on teletherapist directories.

Browse Online Directories

When it comes to online clinician sources, *Psychology Today* is considered the gold standard. Enter your zip code and select your filters—specialty, insurance, and so on. "That should help narrow the search down," says Georgetown clinical psychologist Jean Gearon.

Know Your Benefits

If you have insurance, familiarize yourself with what it will pay for. This will help you sort through dense therapist directories. But don't consider coverage the be-all, end-all. If you find a therapist you like who's out-of-network, you can request an itemized bill for partial reimbursement through your insurance provider. You can also be transparent about your situation: Some therapists may offer sliding-scale fees. It never hurts to ask, says Tenleytown therapist Erika Bugaj.

Don't Get Hung Up on Credentials

LPC, LCSW, LMFT—professional qualifications can look like alphabet soup. While the

letters represent academic degrees, licenses, and specialties, they're not foolproof indicators for care. Instead, Capitol Hill therapist Monica P. Band says to value years of experience over certifications that can be earned in hours. (Still, always make sure the practitioner is licensed.)

Do Your Research

Cross-reference suitable clinicians. "It's important to get some sense of what the person's about—the more you can find out, background-wise, the better," says Dupont Circle therapist Karen Osterle. "Research the heck out of them, and then call as many as you have bandwidth for to get a vibe over the phone." Consultation calls are key for sussing out compatibility. "They are the best way to understand if this is someone you can trust and be comfortable with in the future," says Zamora.

Gauge Their Therapy Style

Are you craving a safe space to air your thoughts, or do you need structure and handouts between sessions? Your answer matters. "It's important to find somebody who can work with you on your own wavelength," Bugaj says. It's a good thing to discuss during a consultation call.

Confirm Their Availability

A therapist is only as helpful as the degree to which they have appointment slots. A common misconception is that teletherapy makes mental-health services available at all hours, but that's often not the case. Plus, there are features to consider beyond the sessions themselves, including between-appointment text support, which may be an important service for some. Gearon and Band agree it's crucial to find out whether a practitioner is bookable beyond 9 to 5. Depending on your schedule, inquire about extended weekday or weekend hours.

Prioritize Compatibility

Every therapist we spoke with concurred: Compatibility and therapeutic alliance are the most important components of successful treatment.

Not a Fit? Change It Up

If, after a few sessions, you realize that it's not working, don't force it. "Life is short, and even though there's a shortage of therapists, that goodness-of-fit piece is important—if you don't feel it, move on," Osterle says. "Say, 'Thank you, but I think this isn't working for me.' You don't owe the therapist an explanation."

VERIFY, THEN TRUST

Experts share the questions they would ask to find the best therapist

Questions to Ask a Therapist

Are you used to working with people like me? Will I have to explain the basics of my identity or cultural experience, or do you already have some understanding of that context?

Could you give me an idea of what the first three sessions would look like?

Will you challenge me rather than tell me what I want to hear?

Do you offer communication or support between sessions? If so, what does that look like?

Am I going to have homework such as readings and worksheets?

Questions to Ask Yourself

Do I feel pressure to decide immediately whether I want to work with this therapist?

Can I imagine telling this person who I am and what I'm going through? Can I imagine this person seeing and understanding my pain?

Does this therapist seem engaged in their work or do they seem burned out?

Could I cry my eyes out with this person, or do they make me feel self-conscious?

Do they speak to me in a way that makes me feel I can have a soft place to land?



IS TELETHERAPY RIGHT FOR YOU?

Before the pandemic, virtual therapy was uncommon. Now it's made counseling more accessible than ever. But that doesn't mean it's good for everyone. Here are five things to consider.

BEFORE THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC introduced us to social distancing, therapy was offered almost exclusively in person. All it took was a global health crisis to change mental-health care as we knew it. Despite our collective isolation, access to therapy greatly improved, thanks to the widespread adoption of teletherapy.

Even as pandemic restrictions lifted and life shifted back to the new normal, teletherapy remained at the forefront of mental-health care. The American Psychological Association reported in 2021 that 96 percent of therapists maintained remote services, with 50 percent taking a hybrid approach of virtual and in-person. The trend has only grown over the past few years. In 2024, an APA survey found that 69 percent of psychologists had adopted a hybrid approach, with just 12 percent committing to fully in-person.

As for quality of care, according to a 2022 study in the *Journal of Patient-Centered Research and Reviews,* patients not only rated teletherapy highly and preferred it, but clinicians did, too. The study also found that practitioners saw virtual mental-health services to be equally–if not more–effective than in-person, as completion rates, attendance, and number of visits increased when remote programs were offered. Meanwhile, a 2025 study published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology* found that in routine practice, teletherapy and in-person sessions offer similar therapeutic and symptom-reduction benefits.

Nevertheless, you may want to consider a few other factors when deciding on which is best for you.

Your Coping Behaviors

A major advantage of in-person therapy is the access it gives therapists to nonverbal behaviors, often lost in virtual therapy. Dupont Circle psychotherapist Karen Osterle urges virtual clients to embrace waist-up video calls. "Don't waste your time or money on collarbone-up therapy," she says, noting that body language offers valuable information that's pivotal in determining therapeutic technique.

Your Living Situation

Columbia Heights therapist Alban Zamora emphasizes privacy and psychological space for teletherapy clients. His perspective? If you're worried someone can hear, you may technically be in the session but you won't be as forthcoming, so it may not be as effective.

Your Ability to Stay Present

The tricky part of teletherapy is remaining focused, especially when a session is sharing screen time with pinging notifications. Capitol Hill psychotherapist Monica P. Band says to be honest about whether you'll be emotionally open onscreen or more detached.

Your Schedule

Teletherapy has grown in popularity because of its convenience. You no longer have to waste time sitting in traffic or on public transportation. It makes prioritizing therapy much less of a headache, especially for parents, students, and busy professionals.

Your Comfort Level

Perhaps most important, your comfort plays a role. According to Zamora, it's key to acknowledge where you can show up most fully. If seeking health support from your home feels safer and allows you to be more open, then teletherapy could be the right fit.

27.8%

Percentage of Americans who rely solely on telehealth options for outpatient mental-health care. Factors associated with a greater use of virtual care include younger age, higher education, access to private insurance, and higher income.

Source: "Telemental Health, Hybrid, and In-Person Outpatient Mental Health Care in the US," JAMA Psychiatry

PHOTOGRAPH BY GETTY IMAGES

A PILL FOR LONELINESS?

Social isolation can change our brains, making us more fearful of new people and experiences. Could drugs help?



COULD PHARMACIES ONE day offer relief for loneliness? Beginning in 2017, behavioral neuroscientist Stephanie Cacioppo conducted a clinical trial that gave participants an oral dose of pregnenolone—a hormone produced by the adrenal gland that acts as the starting material for creating other hormones, including estrogen and testosterone.

A neurosteroid that affects how brain cells communicate with one another, pregnenolone has been shown to calm the amygdala, the area of the brain responsible for threat detection, our fight-or-flight response, and emotions connected to fear. Some research has shown that loneliness can change our brains, causing the amygdala to go haywire. Social situations end up triggering feelings of danger or panic. We mistakenly perceive others as threatening, precisely at the times we're most in need of connection.

Perhaps, Cacioppo reasoned, doses of pregnenolone could ease the excessive fear of new experiences or people that can come from loneliness, leaving us more open to connection. Self-reported results suggested that trial participants were feeling less lonely—but in 2019, Cacioppo suspended the experiment, worried about possible side effects, including poor sleep and cardiovascular issues.

Cacioppo's interest in social isolation was in part driven by the intense grief she felt following the 2018 death of her husband, John, a leading loneliness researcher. In her 2022 book, *Wired for Love,* she writes that there are safer, natural ways to produce the effects of a pregnenolone pill—such as exercising outdoors, which Cacioppo did to cope with her own feelings of isolation. There may not yet be medication for loneliness, but there are remedies.

ALONE BUT NOT LONELY

Finding connection starts from within: The relationship with yourself matters, too. Here's how to make the most of solo time.

FINDING COMMUNITY IS KEY FOR COMBAT-ing loneliness, but what about fostering a connection with the person you spend the most time with? Learning how to connect with yourself is a surefire way to make alone time less lonely. Here, experts share five tips for strengthening your relationship with yourself.

Take Stock

Whether you've just woken up and want to set the tone for your day or you've found yourself with time alone, get in the habit of hitting pause to check how you're feeling in the moment—it can be game-changing for enjoying solo time. "Ask yourself, 'What do I need right now? What is my body telling me?' That's the way to start having a mindful relationship with who you are and what you need," says DC therapist Alban Zamora. Just as you'd ask a guest in your home if they need anything, treat yourself with the same hospitality. This can be a good tactic, too, says Zamora, for navigating stressful moments filled with ruminating thoughts.

Put Pen to Paper

Meditating on how you feel has benefits, but often, writing it down is the key to dislodging unease, making it easier to tune in to yourself. "Journaling slows down the brain and helps us collect our thoughts," says Dupont Circle therapist Karen Osterle. Don't rely on your Notes app, though. "You have to go old-school," she says. Putting pen to paper can slow a racing mind in ways tapping on a smartphone can't, and it's a good activity to integrate into me time.



Lean Into Paradox

Counterintuitive as it may seem, connecting with others can actually strengthen the connection with self. Band says there's a level of universality to the human experience, and when we find peers with similar struggles and joys, it can be healing to recognize we're not alone in our feelings. You can draw on that understanding in moments when you feel isolated.

Move Your Body

"Exercise is medicine," Osterle emphasizes. "You're using both sides of the brain, and that has a way of relaxing it." For solitary time that strengthens both your body and your relationship with yourself, go for a walk, take a bike ride, or roll out a yoga mat at home. "As long as you're cleared by your doctor, exercise has been proven in study after study to be helpful," Osterle says. Many of the therapists we spole to also recommend combining movement with being outside and in nature.

Let It Go

This one can be especially challenging for ambitious Washingtonians. People who value growth may feel like they're falling behind by "just being," notes Band. But being content isn't a sign that you've stopped growing. "It means you're learning how to be present with who you already are," she says. On the couch, at the park, wherever you find yourself. "Maybe what I need is just to sit down for five minutes—it doesn't need to be more than that," says Zamora. Being at ease with solo time—even when it doesn't seem productive—can be part of the mindset shift you need to stop feeling lonely. You may even come to embrace those moments of solitude.

ME TIME

Six destinations for a lovely date with yourself



SPA DAY

Embrace the tranquil side of solitude in one of **SweatHouz's** private contrast-therapy suites, where you can follow a soothing infrared sauna session with an invigorating cold plunge. Prefer some posh pampering? The spa at the **Potomac Hotel** (above), formerly Salamander DC, offers a dozen nourishing massages, plus a variety of skin and nail treatments.

SOLO DINING

Snag a table for one at the Falls Church cafe **Godfrey's,** where you can watch the pastry chefs make fresh croissants. Or, at happy hour, sidle up to the busy aquarium-themed bar at Union Market's **El Presidente.** The bartenders are conversational, and if you're feeling self-conscious about being alone, there's a good chance you won't be the only unaccompanied diner.



PEACEFUL NATURE

Immerse yourself in the outdoors with a tree-lined stroll at **Burke Lake Park** in Fairfax Station, where you can also rest and reflect on one of the lakeside benches or work up a sweat on the trail's Perrier Parcourse Fitness Circuit. For an integrative-art retreat, walk the sprawling grounds of **Glenstone** (above) in Potomac.

PHOTOGRAPH OF SPA BY MATT DANDY; CAPITOL BY TIMOTHY EPPLE/GETTY IMAGES; GLENSTONE COURTESY OF MUSEUM

A BILL FOR LONELINESS?

Proposed legislation would fund more research and social support—and create an office to advise the President



A DECADE AGO, OFFICIAL Washington wasn't thinking about America's loneliness epidemic. "Congress was paying zero attention to this issue, the executive branch was paying zero attention to this issue," says Andrew MacPherson, chair of the Foundation for Social Connection Action Network, a DC nonprofit that advocates for federal policy to address loneliness.

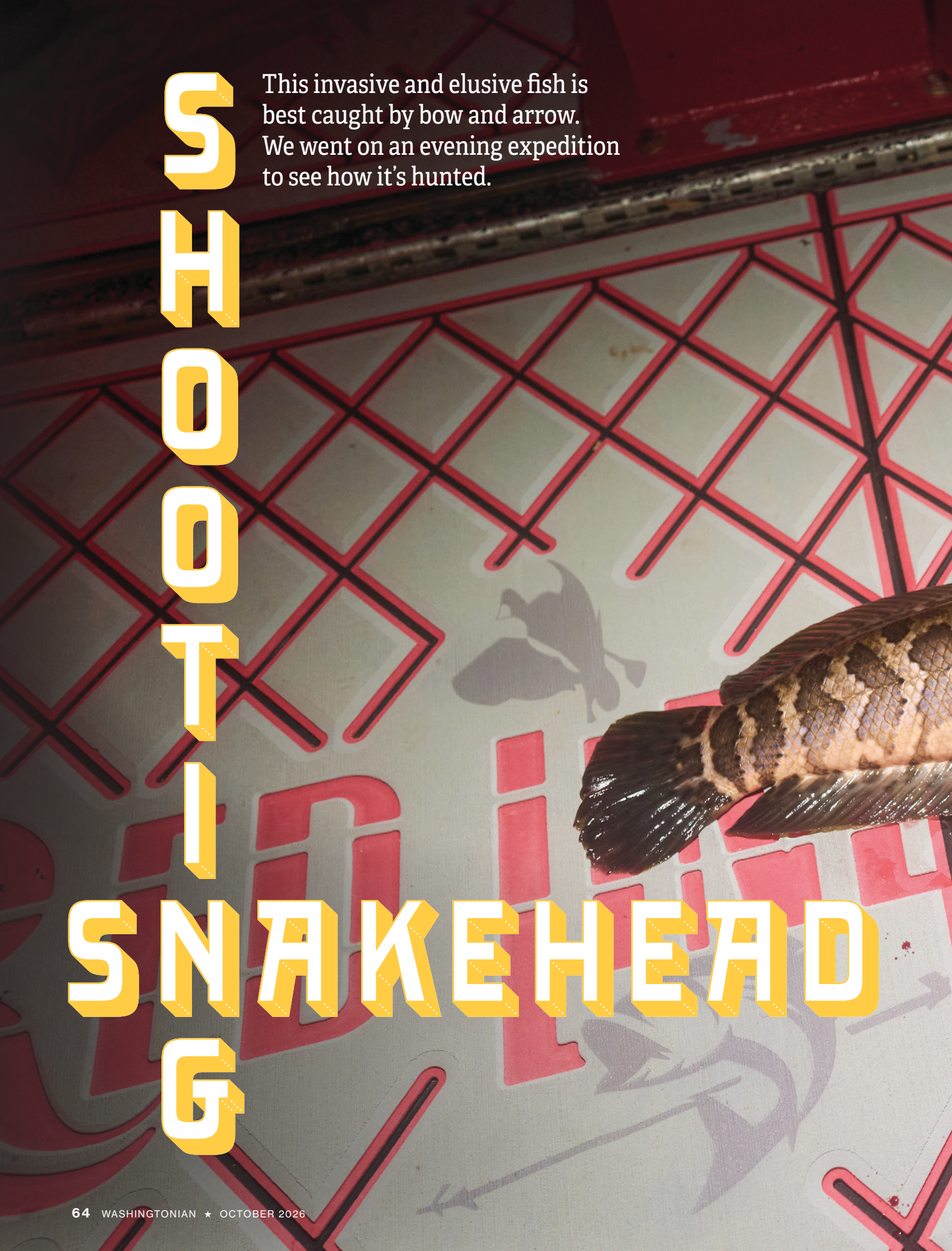
Times change. Today, MacPherson says, multiple pieces of legislation are focused on the problem, including two introduced in June by Democratic Connecticut senator Chris Murphy. One of them, the Addressing Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults Act, would provide $62.5 million in annual funding to community organizations for social outreach and other support for lonely senior citizens—many of whom struggle to build and maintain social connections as they age and face health and mobility challenges.

The other bill, the National Strategy for Social Connection Act, calls for more funding to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to advance research on loneliness and fostering connection. It also would create an Office of Social Connection Policy within the executive branch to advise the President—following the lead of countries such as Japan and the UK, which have established government ministers to address loneliness.

Murphy, who has described loneliness as both a public-health problem and a "full-blown crisis for our democracy," told Politico in 2023 that he didn't "know how much of the decline in friendship and increase in loneliness is reversible. But I don't think the answer is to not try." W

SHOOTING SNAKEHEAD

This invasive and elusive fish is best caught by bow and arrow. We went on an evening expedition to see how it's hunted.



By Sylvie McNamara
Photographs by Tyler Darden





Somewhere in Virginia's rural Northern Neck–down backroads prowled by loose dogs, past acres of soybeans and corn–a lonely dock stretches onto the Rappahannock River. On a hot evening in July, Logan Mattingly is there, boarding a 24-foot SeaArk boat. He and two of his childhood friends, all of them 22, are out hunting snakehead, a big mottled fish whose flaky white flesh is prized by grocers and chefs. If you've ever wondered how these fish wind up on your plate, someone like Logan probably caught them.

A fourth-generation commercial fisherman from Cobb Island, Logan makes most of his living on the water. He crabs, runs charters, and sells rockfish and catfish, while also fighting fires for the federal government. Tonight is more for leisure, though–a way to take his buddies out while maybe breaking even on gas. It's not a great time of year to catch snakehead. They nest in pairs along the shoreline, camouflaging themselves among grasses and reeds, which grow vexingly thick in midsummer. But even in good conditions, snakehead are elusive. They're not schooling fish, so they can't be netted en masse, and they're tough to land with hook-and-line. The best way to take them is bowfishing–by shooting them out of the water one by one.

8:43 PM Before nightfall, it's too bright. The glare on the water makes the fish near impossible to see. But as the boat churns upriver, the last light is leaking away, leaving the dim sky the color of slate. Logan turns into the mouth of a creek where snakehead like to nest.

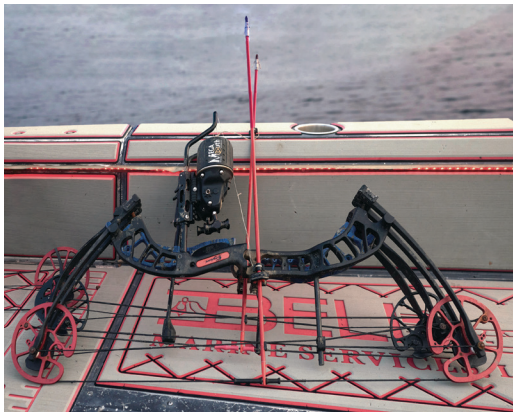
8:55 In the dark water, beneath the boat's blazing amber lights, various fish appear as white clouds, like shadows on an MRI–their bodies writhing, darting, gliding beside the boat. Crabs scuttle along the bottom, kicking up plumes of mud. The tide is low; there's not even a foot of water in the creek. The boat can operate in as shallow as four inches, but Logan prefers at least six.

8:59 The boat hugs the shoreline, brushing cattails and reeds. Logan's friends tease him when he steers into a log. They're all casually firing their bows, warming up with lazy shots at blue catfish or longnose gar. After reeling in the arrows, they shake tendrils of marsh grass from the tips. You can taste the humidity. It lays a slinky film across the skin.

9:02 Logan sees a snakehead, long and brown and thick as a soda can. He misses it, his arrow splashing idly into the water. The snakehead is a nonnative fish, introduced to a pond behind a Maryland strip mall in 2002. Before that, the species had never been found on this continent in the wild. The fear was that snakehead might take over, that they would choke the life from the region's rivers. But now some fisheries biologists believe that the population has



Logan Mattingly (left), a fourth-generation commercial fisherman from Maryland's Cobb Island, has been bowfishing snakehead since he was a teenager. On this July evening on the Rappahannock River, he and his friends are mostly just having fun—they love watching wildlife, listening to music, and shooting fish out of the water—but Logan also sells what they catch to restaurants and grocers back home.







Under the boat's yellow lights, all kinds of creatures are swimming: crabs and turtles, shad and longnose gar, catfish and bowfin, sometimes a muskrat or beaver. An invasive fish, snakehead (opposite page) tastes delicious but is fairly tricky to catch—whenever one appears, Logan and his friends draw their bows and try to shoot before it vanishes into the reeds. They spend hours on the water to nab just 17 fish.





stabilized, or even declined, without doing terrible damage. Blue catfish have been a whole lot worse for the ecosystem.

9:10 Logan's buddy Ethan shoots a snake-head right through the midsection, then pulls it onto the deck of the boat. It's small, Logan says—two or three pounds at most, born either this year or last. It flips around the deck before Ethan tosses it into a cooler to bleed out.

9:20 Logan gets a snakehead, about the same size as the last. This one isn't moving. He slithers it off the arrow into the cooler and re-rigs the bow. At low tide, the shallow waters draw snakehead out of the backs of the creeks, and with more of the grass above water, they have fewer places to hide. The tide is currently going out. About an hour from now, it'll be ideal.

Logan's friend Tyler pulls a long, skinny fish from the water, but it's a bowfin, not a snakehead. It makes a ruckus in the cooler, even after the lid is closed. A muskrat crawls from the creek and ambles into the reeds. The guys are happy. They laugh when they miss a shot. They rib each other and sip Mountain Dew, swaying to loud country music, not a life jacket in sight.

9:34 Simultaneous shots from Logan and Tyler. One hits. This snakehead is bigger: six or seven pounds. Their bows are barely restrung when all three of them shoot again. That fish was enormous, but they all miss it somehow. "What in the world!" Logan says, laughing. He's relieved that the fish are here. They're all around—far more of them than he expected.

9:35 "There was one," Logan says, lowering his bow. "I seen it disappear."

9:41 Bowfishing snakehead is the smallest of Logan's income streams, but it's also the most fun. On the boat, everything is so alive: the air, the water, the energy of the hunt. Every so often, the guys tense and lean forward in unison, all of them drawing their bows. A lumbering catfish drags itself around the side of the boat. They relax.

9:47 "You smoked him!" Logan says to Tyler, who's reeling another one in. Snakehead is expensive. Right now, a pound of blue catfish goes for about 75 cents, whereas a pound of whole snakehead might fetch $4. That's because snakehead is scarcer, tastier, and more labor-intensive to catch.

But there's actually better money in run-

ning bowfishing charters—in selling the experience of the snakehead hunt, rather than the meat itself. Anglers come from all over the continent for an opportunity to shoot this fish from Logan's boat. It's possible that the species will become a valuable game fish for the region, like the Potomac's largemouth and smallmouth bass.

10:02 A school of shad are darting around the creek, leaping into the air. "They're gonna jump onto the boat," Tyler jokes.

10:05 It's slack tide now. Optimal conditions. Boots on the side of the boat, arrows pointed into the depths, the men stare into the river. It's tough to see the snakehead, to distinguish them from logs, to ignore the constant fluttering of other fish. Sometimes, one of the guys will point and say, "There," and a shot will go off within seconds.

10:10 Two of them shoot the same fish. It's a very small snakehead, and it seemed like they were both going to miss. But the trick is to account for distortion. Light refracts in the water, making everything seem closer to the surface than it is. The deeper the snakehead, the farther beneath it you have to aim. Those shots had looked about four inches too low.

10:12 Logan whips his hands from the boat console and fires a wild shot into the dark. On his arrow is a huge snakehead dripping blood from its wound. It takes a second for him to realize that the snakehead has a catfish hanging out of its mouth. It was in the process of eating dinner when it died. The boys crowd around. None has ever seen such a thing. "This one's for the business page," Logan says, snapping a picture with his phone.

10:37 Logan is shooting while piloting, making small adjustments with one hand while his other remains on the bow. Tyler spots a huge gar on the left side of the boat. Nobody else sees it, and they accuse him of making it up.

10:45 All three shoot at a snakehead, but it scrambles away, quicker than you'd think it could go.

10:53 The cooler is thick with bodies, the water at the bottom red with blood. By this point, they've at least broken even—eight snakehead should just about cover broken arrows and gas. They'll spend the rest of the night ambling through different creeks, cracking jokes, talking about their lives. Past 1 o'clock, the tide will rise. At that point, it's no longer worth it to fish.

Back at the boat ramp, the men tally their haul: three gar, one bowfin, and 17 snakehead. The gar and bowfin will get cut to pieces as bait for Logan's crab pots. But the snakehead—which weighs in at 118 pounds—is worth about $475. Logan will offer it to a carryout place back home on Cobb Island, one that's been wanting to offer a snakehead-nuggets special.

For three or so hours of fishing, Logan will make a couple hundred bucks. But it was never about the money. He wanted to hang out with his friends and enjoy a languid summer night. "This is so peaceful," he says. "You get to look at all the wildlife, away from the busy city lights and the traffic and everything else." W

Staff writer Sylvie McNamara is at smcnamara@washingtonian.com.



pwc

Our people are our power

PwC and Jeanelle Johnson, PwC DC Managing Partner, proudly celebrate our women partners and principals in the DC office and their exceptional leadership alongside Washingtonian's Most Powerful Women.

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The most powerful leaders remain curious.

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Fatima Akbar
Leah Alfonso
Juleanne Allen
Julie Allen
Sandra Aresti
Nita Asher
Vineeta Bansal
Danielle Bartlett
Beth Bell
Jyoti Bontemps
Roslyn Brooks
Priscilla Bullock
Alicia Chang
Hui Chang
Luna Corbetta
Jen Darling
Danielle DeRosa
Ninee Dewar
Audrey Ellis
Candace Ewell
Victoria Fan
Nikole Flax
Ashley Gardner
Gina Gin
Melanie Glover
Anna Green
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Olga Harris
Jamie Harvey
Beth Hess
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Ciara Johnson
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Meredith Mark
Megan Marlin
Natalie Martin
Lindsay McCord
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Pam Olson
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We celebrate Melissa's well-deserved recognition and the entire team helping create a healthier future for all.

Learn more about how we're making healthier happen together at CVSHealth.com.

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JANEESE LEWIS GEORGE

The DC Council member vanquished a half dozen other contenders to win the Democratic nomination for mayor, all but ensuring that the third-generation Washingtonian will next lead the city. The Howard University–trained lawyer knows that one of her chief challenges will be a President who has threatened a federal takeover of DC should the Democratic Socialist become mayor. "As mayor, I'm willing to work with the federal government and, yes, this administration to improve the lives of DC residents," she says. "I will also stand up to anyone who harms our communities or threatens local autonomy."

By *Washingtonian* Staff | Photographs by Lexey Swall

MOST

Powerful Women

The 300 most influential women in Washington who are shaping government, business, the arts, law, media, education, and nonprofits

FROM A CAGE FIGHT on the White House South Lawn to the Defense Secretary's call for testosterone testing of the military, a current of masculine energy has been coursing through the nation's capital this year, including, it would appear, in some high-level personnel maneuvers within the administration.

As we compiled this Most Powerful Women list, we were struck by how much had changed since 2025. Four Cabinet secretaries—all women—as well as the White House press secretary, another woman, are gone from positions they held a year ago. Not one of them so far has been replaced by another woman.

The loss of women in the executive branch is striking, because in every other corner of Washington, an increasing number are at the helm—so many women CEOs and presidents, directors and senior leaders, that it's a challenge to pare down all the names.

To assemble this list, we reached out to experts in every field, asking which women are making things happen—influencing a piece of the world, pulling levers, building things, bringing people together, effecting change.

Just as their ranks have grown, what we think of as a "powerful" woman has shifted through the years. At one time, it wasn't unusual for a woman to be considered powerful, or at least important, by virtue of her husband's position. Think an engaged wife of a senator or philanthropist. That version of power now seems quaint as women are occupying those Senate seats—as well as executive suites, mastheads, and judicial benches—themselves.

Many have also broken out of traditional, institutional ladder-climbing to become their own spheres of influence, creating their own businesses and brands. So our list includes the CEO of a Fortune 500 aerospace company, to be sure, but also a podcaster whose political connections give her access to the White House, as well as lawyers who broke off from Big Law to start a boutique firm.

As always, politics is a major factor—in some cases, *the* major factor—in any measure of power in Washington. The ever-changing political landscape means this list is constantly churning.

We realize some of the names are lightning rods—highly partisan women in highly partisan times. There are MAGA-aligned women as well as those who fight the Trump agenda every day. We don't mean to lift up either side or pass judgment on anyone's accomplishments. We're simply shining a light on the women wielding power—in some cases, boldly and loudly; in other cases, quietly and with little notice—in the nation's capital today.

NATIONAL POLITICS

MEGHAN BAUER
White House Cabinet Secretary

MICHELLE BOWMAN
Governor and Vice Chair for Supervision, Federal Reserve Board

LISA D. COOK
Governor, Federal Reserve Board

MONICA CROWLEY
US Chief of Protocol

KIRSTEN DAVIES
Chief Information Officer, Department of Defense

NATALIE HARP
Special and Executive Assistant to the President

KELLY LOEFFLER
Administrator, Small Business Administration

LINDA McMAHON
Secretary of Education

KATIE MILLER
Host, "The Katie Miller Podcast" (unofficial White House–aligned podcast)

JEANINE PIRRO
US Attorney for DC

BROOKE ROLLINS
Secretary of Agriculture

LAURA SWETT
Chair, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

JENNIFER THORNTON
General Counsel, US Trade Representative

MELANIA TRUMP
First Lady of the United States

USHA VANCE
Second Lady of the United States

SUSIE WILES
White House Chief of Staff

LOCAL POLITICS

ANGELA D. ALSOBROOKS
US Senator from Maryland

AISHA BRAVEBOY
Prince George's County Executive

APRIL McCLAIN DELANEY
US Representative from Maryland

GHAZALA HASHMI
Lieutenant Governor of Virginia

TARA JACKSON
Prince George's County State's Attorney

JANEESE LEWIS GEORGE
Democratic Nominee for Mayor of DC

ARUNA MILLER
Lieutenant Governor of Maryland

ELISSA SILVERMAN
At-Large Member, DC Council

ABIGAIL SPANBERGER
Governor of Virginia

TAMMY STIDHAM
Associate Regional Director, Lands and Planning, National Park Service

VIVIAN WATTS
Delegate, Fairfax County, Virginia House of Delegates

POWER ON THE HILL

EMILY ACKERMAN
Floor Director, Office of Majority Whip Tom Emmer

STEPHANIE BICE
US Representative from Oklahoma

KATIE BRITT
US Senator from Alabama

SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO
US Senator from West Virginia; Chair, Senate Republican Policy Committee

KATHERINE CLARK
US Representative from Massachusetts; House Minority Whip

JODIE McLEAN

The Chicago native joined Edens when she was 22, a new college graduate planning to stay at the commercial real-estate firm for two years. Thirty-six years later—"Yes, 36," she says, "which sounds slightly crazy when I say it aloud"—McLean is CEO of the company, now one of the leading owners, operators, and developers of open-air retail and mixed-use spaces around the country, including Union Market. "There is something incredibly rewarding about staying long enough to actually build an institution—to see decisions you made 20 or 30 years ago compound through people, culture, communities, and performance."


UNION MAR



MYECHIA MINTER-JORDAN

A graduate of Brown University's medical school, Minter-Jordan went to business school at Johns Hopkins after becoming a physician, to better understand the healthcare system and become a more effective advocate for patients. The dual track led her to AARP, where she's been CEO since 2024. "This role gives me an incredible opportunity to represent more than 125 million Americans 50 and older and to help shape how we think about aging and its impact across every industry in our country."

SUSAN COLLINS
US Senator from Maine; Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee

ROSA DeLAURO
US Representative from Connecticut; Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee

REEMA DODIN
Chief of Staff for US Senator Brian Schatz

VIRGINIA FOXX
US Representative from North Carolina; Chair, House Rules Committee

TONI-MARIE HIGGINS
Chief of Staff, Office of Senator John Boozman

ELIZABETH MacDONOUGH
US Senate Parliamentarian

LISA McCLAIN
US Representative from Michigan; Chair, House Republican Conference

LISA MURKOWSKI
US Senator from Alaska

PATTY MURRAY
US Senator from Washington

ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ
US Representative from New York

NANCY PELOSI
US Representative from California; Speaker Emerita, US House of Representatives

ELISSA SLOTKIN
US Senator from Michigan

ELIZABETH WARREN
US Senator from Massachusetts; Vice Chair, Senate Democratic Conference

LEGAL POWERS

NAN ARON
Founder and President Emeritus, Alliance for Justice

LISA BANKS and DEBRA KATZ
Founding Partners, Katz Banks Kumin

AMY CONEY BARRETT
Associate Justice, US Supreme Court

ANNA BLACKBURNE-RIGSBY
Chief Judge, DC Court of Appeals

LISA BLATT
Partner and Chair, Supreme Court and Appellate Practice, Williams & Connolly

CRISTINA CARVALHO
Partner, ArentFox Schiff

HARMEET DHILLON
Assistant US Attorney General, Civil Rights

KAREN DUNN and JEANNIE RHEE
Founding Partners, Dunn Isaacson Rhee

JAMIE GORELICK
Senior Counsel, WilmerHale

SARAH HARRIS
Principal Deputy US Solicitor General

KETANJI BROWN JACKSON
Associate Justice, US Supreme Court

AMY JEFFRESS
Partner, Hecker Fink

ELENA KAGAN
Associate Justice, US Supreme Court

SKYE PERRYMAN
President and CEO, Democracy Forward

ELIZABETH PRELOGAR
Partner and Chair of Supreme Court and Appellate Practice, Cooley

Gina Adams

Executive Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary FedEx Corporation
2026 Most Powerful Women in Washington

Congratulations, Gina! Your leadership, expertise, and commitment continue to make an extraordinary impact.

We're proud to celebrate you and the difference you make every day.

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NEOMI RAO
Judge, DC Circuit, US Court of Appeals

NICOLE SAHARSKY
Partner, Mayer Brown

DIANE SELTZER
President, DC Bar Association; Principal, The Seltzer Law Firm

LINDA SINGER
Partner and Chair, Public Client, Motley Rice

SONIA SOTOMAYOR
Associate Justice, US Supreme Court

BETH WILKINSON
Partner, Wilkinson Stekloff

INTERNATIONAL POWERS

SHEIKHA AL-ZAIN AL-SABAH
Kuwaiti Ambassador to the US

PRINCESS REEMA BANDAR AL-SAUD
Saudi Ambassador to the US

KRISTALINA GEORGIEVA
Managing Director, International Monetary Fund

DINA KAWAR
Jordanian Ambassador to the US

JOVITA NELIUPSIENE
European Union Ambassador to the US

EDUCATION POWERS

IRMA BECERRA
President, Marymount University

AMINTA BREAUX
President, Bowie State University

ROBERTA CORDANO
President, Gallaudet University

LAURA FUCHS
President, Washington Teachers' Union

ELLEN GRANBERG
President, George Washington University

ANNE KRESS
President, Northern Virginia Community College

PATRICIA McGUIRE
President, Trinity Washington University

JENNIFER KING RICE
Senior Vice President and Provost, University of Maryland

VICKY WILKINS
Provost and Chief Academic Officer, American University

FALECIA D. WILLIAMS
President, Prince George's Community College

BUSINESS POWERS

GINA ADAMS
Executive Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary, FedEx

JAN ADAMS
Founder and CEO, JMA Solutions

SHAZA ANDERSEN
Founder and CEO, Trustar Bank

KRISTINE MARTIN ANDERSON
President and COO, Booz Allen

MARY BRADY
President and CEO, Economic Club of DC

VALERIE CAMILLO
Chair, Women's Tennis Association

TERESA CARLSON
Global Head, Public Sector, Anthropic

DEBRA LERNER COHEN
Majority Owner, Washington Nationals

MARLENE COLUCCI
CEO, The Business Council

KAREN DAHUT
CEO, Google Public Sector

MONICA MODI DALWADI
Eastern Region Managing Principal, Baker Tilly

ASHLEY DAVIS
Partner, S-3 Group

MONICA DIXON
President, External Affairs, and CAO, Monumental Sports Entertainment

ANN FAIRCHILD
President and CEO, Siemens USA

KATHRYN FALK
Vice President and Market Leader, Cox Communications Northern Virginia

MICHELLE FREEMAN
Owner and CEO, Carl M. Freeman Companies

ADENA FRIEDMAN
Chair and CEO, Nasdaq

NORA GARDNER
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AMY GILLILAND
President, General Dynamics Information Technology

MORGAN GRESS
Communications Partner, Andreessen Horowitz

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rand* construction's Founder and Chairman has been named one of Washingtonian's Most Powerful Women

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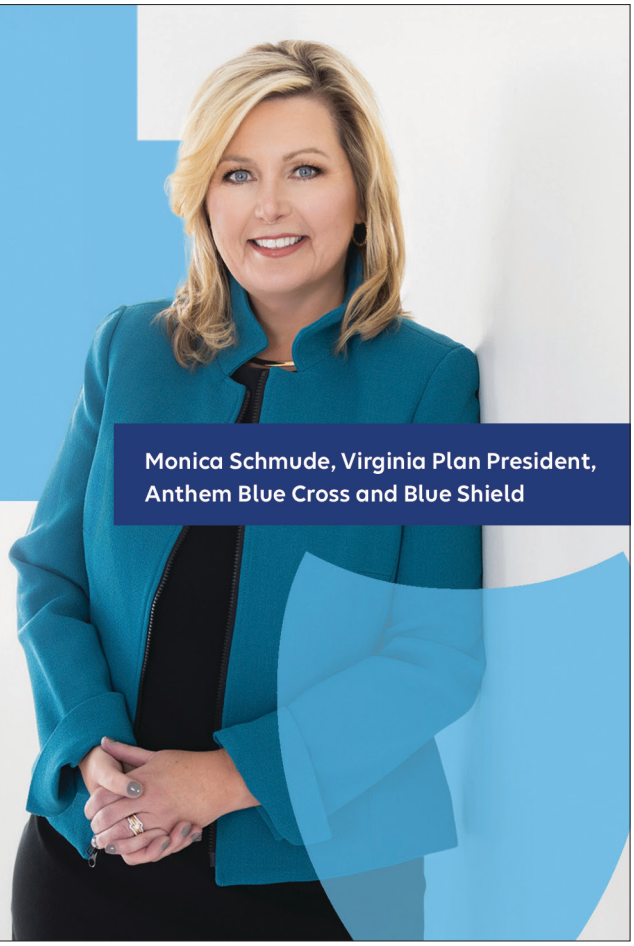
CONSTRUCTION

The nations largest woman-founded, women-owned commercial general contractor



Congratulations, Monica, on being named one of *Washingtonian's* Most Powerful Women.

We recognize your relentless commitment and dedication to making healthcare more affordable and accessible to all those we serve.



Monica Schmude, Virginia Plan President, Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield

Anthem

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Congratulations to Mary on being named one of **Washingtonian's 2026 Most Powerful Women.**



Mary Streett
Senior Vice President, Americas, Communications and External Affairs, bp

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NATALIE HARP

If one measure of power in Washington is proximity to the President, few rival Natalie Harp, the White House aide known for her Zelig-like presence by Trump's side, including on his clandestine flight out of Turkey in July. At 35, she's responsible for much of what Donald Trump reads—she supplies him with instant printouts of appealing news stories—and much of what he posts on social media. Her worldview is indistinguishable from her boss's, whom she calls "the Most Consequential President in History," punctuating the comment to *Washingtonian* with Trump-style capital letters.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW HARNIK/GETTY IMAGES

DELTA

We're proud to congratulate



HEATHER WINGATE

ON BEING NAMED ONE OF WASHINGTONIAN'S 2026 MOST POWERFUL WOMEN

At Delta Air Lines, we are proud to celebrate the spirit that's illuminated our path - our people. Congratulations go out to our very own Heather Wingate, Delta's Senior Vice President of Government Affairs, for being named to the list of Washingtonian's 2026 Most Powerful Women. Heather's passion and leadership are fundamental to Delta's success and will continue to move and uplift people in Washington and around the world.

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Congratulations to Candi Wolff on being named one of *Washingtonian's* "2026 Most Powerful Women." Citi is proud to have Candi advocating for us in the nation's capital and in the capital cities of the more than 180 countries and jurisdictions where we do business around the world.

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Leadership Shaping
What's Next.

The strength of our region is driven by leaders who inspire progress, foster collaboration and elevate those around them.

CBRE proudly congratulates Kyle Schoppmann, recognized as one of Washingtonian's Most Powerful Women of 2026. Through her vision, strategic leadership and commitment to excellence, Kyle continues to help shape the future of commercial real estate across the Mid-Atlantic.

Congratulations to all of Washingtonian's Most Powerful Women whose leadership helps the region thrive.



Kyle Schoppmann

President, Mid-Atlantic, CBRE Group, Inc.
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CONGRATULATIONS CATHERINE!

Goodwill of Greater Washington is a caring local nonprofit that transforms lives and communities through the power of education and employment.

We are so proud of Catherine Meloy for receiving this recognition. Catherine always leads with heart, vision, and an unwavering commitment to community impact.

She is a standard bearer for our organization and our region!

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CATHERINE MELOY: SELECTED AS ONE OF 2026's MOST POWERFUL WOMEN IN WASHINGTON.

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Prince George's Community College congratulates Dr. Falecia D. Williams on being named one of Washingtonian's 2026 Most Powerful Women. We celebrate Dr. Williams' vision to create an exceptional learning environment where students can pursue new opportunities, discover their potential, and build brighter futures. Her leadership reflects the College's commitment to Students First and empowering every student to succeed.



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For more than five decades, Nan has been a fearless champion for justice — advancing the rights of everyday people, challenging injustice, and defending the rule of law.



Nan's five decades of distinguished leadership have significantly advanced the rights of everyday people and upheld the rule of law. It is a profound honor to build upon the remarkable legacy she established. As the Alliance for Justice enters its next half-century, we remain committed to advancing her vision and steadfast in our pursuit of a more just and equitable society for all.



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President,
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Michelle makes a lasting impact on the communities where she lives, works, and plays. With a forward-thinking vision for real estate and community design, her leadership creates meaningful connections between people and place, enriching lives today while shaping vibrant communities and destinations for generations to come.





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She led the Maximum Pressure Campaign against Iran, helped lay the foundation for the historic Abraham Accords, and authored *The Battle for the Jewish State* and Project Esther, a Heritage policy initiative aimed at combatting and defeating antisemitism. At The Heritage Foundation, she tackles America's most urgent security challenges. From countering the China threat to securing our borders, **Victoria Coates** continues to shape the course of America's national security.

Thank you, **Victoria**, for your unwavering commitment to the security of the American people, advancing peace through strength.

Congratulations on being recognized among the most powerful women in D.C. for the second year in a row!



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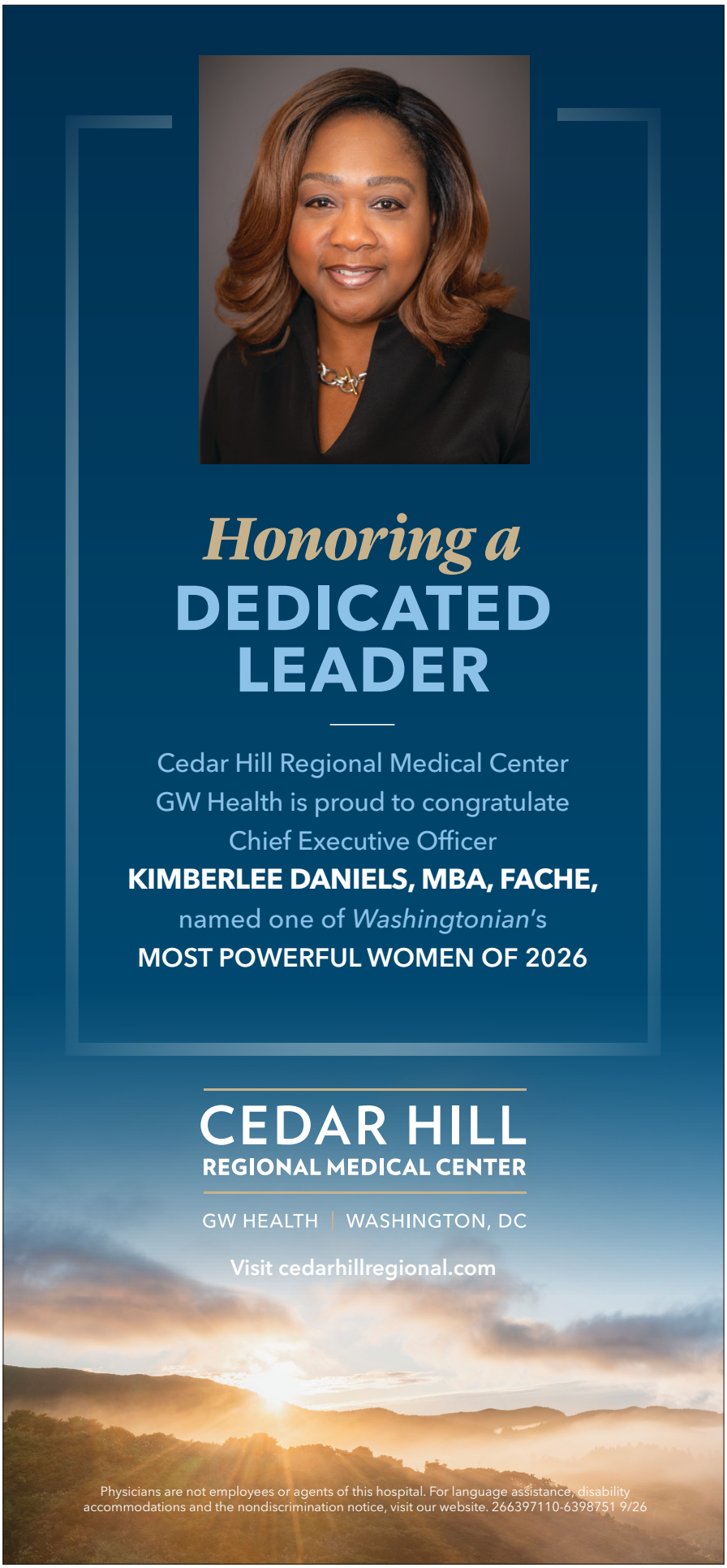

ARTS AND CULTURE

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Want to nominate someone for our next Most Powerful Women list?

Send an email with the person's name and position, along with the reason for the nomination, to *powerfulwomen@washingtonian.com.*

AGA
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Congratulations, Karen,

on being recognized as one of the most powerful women in Washington!



THE BUSINESS COUNCIL CONGRATULATES

our CEO, Marlene Colucci, *honored among* Washingtonian's Most Powerful Women *in 2026, for the vision and leadership she brings to our organization and to business leaders around the world.*

THE BUSINESS COUNCIL

www.thebusinesscouncil.org

WOMEN OF INFLUENCE

Turn the pages to familiarize yourself with these successful and inspiring female professionals leading the local workforce.

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

Dr. Samantha Siranli, DMD, PHD, FACP

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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 to 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.

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Women juggle a lot—careers, businesses, families, and personal goals. But when it comes to finances, the challenges can be different. West Financial Services has strong female professionals who understand having a plan that truly reflects your life and values leads to clarity and confidence in your financial future, and trust in your advisor.

West Financial has served our clients with an approach based on financial planning, communication, creativity, and care for over 40 years. It isn't just about asset management - though prudent management is important. It is about understanding each individual, family, and business, and then coordinating all aspects of financial well-being: investments, insurance, taxes, estate planning, and healthcare costs. West Financial Services ties it all together in one plan, coaching you along the way. The decisions we make and the advice we provide reflect our belief and responsibility to always do what is in our client's best interests.

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Washingtonian's title-exclusive Faces of Washington section, showcasing the people behind some of the city's most notable businesses, will be published in the January 2027 issue.

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Choosing the right family law attorney is an important decision. Judges and other lawyers view Webb Soypher McGrath as a prominent law firm whose attorneys are respected leaders in family law. Our dynamic group of attorneys provide sound judgment and creative solutions to help clients preserve assets and achieve the best outcomes for themselves and their children. We are experienced in resolving high conflict and dynamic family issues. Our colleagues often ask us to serve as mediators and to provide expert witness opinions in their cases. Understanding the importance of being responsive and available to our clients, we provide thorough legal counsel while being cost-effective. Our family law firm is located in Bethesda, making us accessible to our clients in both Maryland and the District of Columbia. Trust us to help you protect what matters most.

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Katie Bertram combines decades of medical-malpractice trial advocacy and a stellar record of jury trial verdicts with her knowledge as the former Georgetown Hospital Director of Risk Management to advocate for patients and their families after their lives are turned upside down by medical mistakes.

Recent Trial Results 2019-2026
$14 million verdict MD (2026)
$25 million verdict DC (2025)
$2.5 million verdict MD (2024)
$4 million verdict DC (2024)
$17.1 million verdict DC
$35 million verdict VA
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IN THE NEXT ISSUE:
FALL REAL ESTATE GUIDE

Showcase your properties and/or your expertise



CONTEXT:
Teed up by a (positive) editorial story on the real estate market

POSITION UPGRADE:
Appears in an upgraded section of the magazine; not the back

SPACE LIMITED:
6 pages maximum, first-come, first-served

To secure space contact **Matt Hendrickson:**
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INDUSTRY ICONS: FALL FORESIGHTS

We invited leading real estate industry pros to share their market insights and advice.

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





ATHENA PETERSEN & KENNETH FAGAN

REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENTS OF LONG & FOSTER REAL ESTATE

What You Need to Know About the DMV Real Estate Market

We spoke with Athena Petersen and Kenneth Fagan, senior vice presidents and regional managers at Long & Foster Real Estate, to hear their thoughts on the current market, how the past year went, and what they expect in the coming year.

In one word, how would you describe the 2026 real estate market?

KF: Steady. If you look at the broader D.C. metro, we've seen about the same number of sales as last year, with relatively consistent pricing, too. Now, in real estate, everything depends on the market. Some neighborhoods might have few homes for sale, while others are seeing a lot more come onto the market. More broadly, supply has gone up, but it's still a sellers' market.

AP: That's so true, Kenneth. Take Fairfax County, Virginia, for example. Through August, they saw a 20% increase in active listings, yet months of supply are under 2, while a more balanced market has between 4 and 6 months of supply.

What does that mean for buyers and sellers in the area?

KF: Opportunities, especially as we head toward the end of the year. In fall, sellers are often more motivated, and there are typically fewer buyers than in the spring. So if you're looking now, you may find more options and have more room to negotiate on price and closing details.

What about mortgage rates? Should consumers hold off until they're lower?

AP: Mortgage rates will likely stay in the mid- to high-6 percent range for the immediate future. I've always advised clients to remember that the mortgage rate is just one piece of the puzzle. You need to evaluate all the elements that factor into your budget, and a professional agent like those at Long & Foster can help you consider what's best for you.

What else does someone need to know about today's market in the DMV?

KF: Like Athena said, working with an experienced agent is the key to success. At Long & Foster, our agents can help you with everything you need to buy, sell, rent or own a home, including mortgage, title, insurance, inspection and more.

AP: We call it our All-Inclusive Real Estate Experience, and in today's world, where we all want things simplified, your Long & Foster agent delivers a single team of experts all working together to streamline and simplify the real estate process.

longandfoster.com



SARAH HAKE

COMPASS

With a reputation built on exceptional client service and outstanding results, Sarah Hake is a distinguished real estate agent with Compass in Georgetown, Washington, DC, and recognized as the Face of Luxury Real Estate. Her business is primarily driven by repeat clients and referrals, a testament to the high level of service and representation she consistently delivers.

Sarah takes her fiduciary duty to her clients very seriously, ensuring their best interests remain at the forefront of every transaction. Known for her deep understanding of the local market and keen attention to detail, she is dedicated to making the real estate process seamless and rewarding for her clients. Her approach is rooted in building genuine relationships and taking the time to understand each client's priorities, allowing her to provide personalized guidance and a strategy tailored to their individual goals.

Her integrity and transparency have earned her the trust of a diverse clientele, from first-time homebuyers to seasoned investors. Sarah's proven track record of delivering exceptional results across Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia reflects her market expertise, strategic approach, and steadfast commitment to her clients' success. With Sarah, clients gain more than a real estate agent; they gain a trusted advisor who values their confidence and is committed to achieving exceptional outcomes. Her referral based business is a reflection of her dedication to providing thoughtful advocacy, white-glove service, and results that consistently exceed expectations.

Contact Sarah to schedule a complimentary, no-obligation consultation.

Recent Client Testimonial

"Sarah is such a wonderful, efficient, and intelligent agent. She made sure I was able to see lots of properties to help narrow down my search and she worked diligently to finalize everything once I found that home. I recommend her to everyone and anyone." - Margaret P., Buyer

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HEATHER DEVOTO

FIRST HOME MORTGAGE

After more than $1.4 billion in closed loans, Heather Devoto has experienced nearly every kind of housing market. One lesson has remained constant: successful homebuying is less about trying to perfectly time the market and more about being prepared when the right opportunity comes along.

"Markets are always going to change. Rates change, inventory changes, and buyers' priorities change," Heather says. "What matters is understanding what you can control, knowing your options, and having a strategy that makes sense for you."

A native of Arlington and Branch Manager in McLean, Heather has spent her career helping buyers navigate the Washington-area market. Today, she sees education and preparation becoming even more important as buyers weigh affordability, changing rates, and an evolving range of financing options.

Her business is evolving, too. Heather has recently expanded her team, allowing the group to provide even more support while maintaining the personal experience that has defined her career.

"I've always believed that this business is about relationships. Growing our team means having more people who share that same commitment to being available, communicating clearly, and taking great care of our clients and partners."

Looking ahead, Heather expects the market to continue creating opportunities for buyers who are prepared to recognize them. Her advice is not to wait for every condition to be perfect. Start the conversation early, understand the numbers, explore the options available, and build a plan that can move with the market.

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ERICH CABE

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The Washington, DC metro housing market continues to prove that real estate is intensely local and increasingly property-specific. While broader headlines may suggest a single market narrative, what we are seeing on the ground is far more nuanced.

Well-positioned, thoughtfully prepared homes in desirable neighborhoods continue to attract strong buyer interest, particularly when they are priced correctly from the start. At the same time, buyers have become more discerning. Homes that are overpriced, require significant updating, or do not present well can sit longer, even when inventory remains relatively constrained.

Interest rates continue to influence affordability and buyer behavior, but they have not eliminated demand. Many buyers who spent the last several years waiting for rates or prices to fall are recognizing that life circumstances - growing families, job changes, schools, downsizing, do not always align with the "perfect" market. Serious buyers are active, but they are approaching purchases with greater scrutiny and patience.

For sellers, this makes strategy more important than ever. Pricing, preparation, presentation, and launch timing can meaningfully affect both the level of buyer engagement and the ultimate sales price. Creating momentum before a property formally enters the market can also be a powerful advantage.

The opportunity in today's market comes from understanding these differences. There is no universal DC area market; conditions can vary considerably by neighborhood, price point, property type, and even from one house to the next.

More than ever, successful sellers and buyers benefit from experienced, hyperlocal guidance and a strategy tailored to the individual property.

Providing that kind of thoughtful, hyperlocal guidance is at the heart of what our team does.

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CAROLYN SAPPENFIELD

THE CAROLYN HOMES TEAM
TTR | SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY

The fall market will reward experience, preparation, and strategy. Buyers are becoming more selective, making it important to understand not just what is available, but which opportunities are worth pursuing.

For sellers, Carolyn Sappenfield's expertise comes into play well before a home hits the market. She and her team know which improvements will make a difference, where to invest, how to price strategically, and how to position a property to stand out from the competition.

Their roots in the DMV provide a perspective that market statistics alone cannot. They understand the nuances between neighborhoods, streets, school districts, and buyer preferences, and how those details influence value.

After decades in real estate and countless transactions, Carolyn's role is to bring clarity to complicated decisions. Whether buying, selling, building, or planning ahead, she believes the best outcomes come from having a knowledgeable advocate who sees both the big picture and the details.



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JANICE POUCH

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Janice Pouch's real estate lens is shaped by a previous career in international finance, more than three decades in Washington, DC and 22 years as a Georgetown homeowner. But her story begins far earlier, growing up in a military family with Panamanian roots, moving between cultures, languages, and continents.

Today, that same analytical precision and negotiation strength define her work as a trusted advisor in the DMV, where she is known for partnering closely with clients, elevating their understanding of housing markets, and building relationships that last long after the closing table.

She describes the 2026 market as one "in transition". Slightly softer prices and rising inventory mark a reset rather than a retreat, signifying a region catching its breath after years of accelerated appreciation. The DC area remains one of the country's most sought-after markets for both homeownership and investment, a trend underscored by the continued price appreciation and competition for luxury single-family homes in select neighborhoods.



BABS BECKWITH

REALTOR® | CORCORAN MCENEARNEY

Babs Beckwith is unquestionably the most knowledgeable and experienced realtor in Old Town, Alexandria. With 30+ years specializing in this coveted community, and top-tier awards for her outstanding sales performance, she enjoys a loyal clientele who turn to her first for excellent results. Whether you're looking to buy, sell or rent an iconic historic home or luxurious new construction property, Babs is the ultimate real estate resource in Old Town. Her vast expertise, impressive negotiating skills and superior service have earned her a stellar reputation, and ongoing repeat/referral business.

Babs has closed countless transactions over the years, including selling many homes in the area several times over. Among them are within the waterfront communities of Harborside and Robinson Landing, 210 Duke Street, which was owned by Dr. James Craik, George Washington's personal physician, and 209 South Saint Asaph Street, home of Gen. John Slough, the military governor of Alexandria during the Civil War.

Her awards also set her apart and include: 100 Best Agents, Elite Producer Platinum, Life Member of the NVAR Top Producers Club, *Washingtonian* 'The Face of Old Town Real Estate' (annually since 2017), 22nd Top Producer in Greater Washington (*Washington Business Journal*), and Top 1% of Agents Nationwide by *Real Trends/The Wall Street Journal.*

Babs has lived in Old Town for 30 years in an 1820-built home, and is very active in the community she loves. She frequents the local shops and restaurants, and knows many of the business owners. Clients trust Babs implicitly to guide them through complex markets and deliver exceptional outcomes. If you're interested in Old Town, she'd be happy to show you its unique offerings – from walkable living & proximity to the Potomac, cobblestone streets & brick sidewalks reflecting history on every corner, to luxurious new construction that honors a sense of heritage. Contact Babs today for a private consultation to explore the Old Town lifestyle!

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JOHN MENTIS

LONG & FOSTER

Consumers continue to face a higher cost of living, elevated mortgage rates, limited housing inventory and geopolitical uncertainty. With little suggesting meaningful improvement before year-end, these pressures are likely to carry into 2027.

Until inflation cools, interest rates are unlikely to fall substantially. Meanwhile, the "K-shaped" economy means higher rates and rising costs affect consumers unevenly, with budget-conscious buyers feeling the greatest pressure. Energy costs and uncertainty surrounding oil prices add another inflationary risk.

Together, these factors leave many consumers hesitant to buy or sell, limiting both housing supply and demand. Tightening Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac condominium lending guidelines may create additional challenges for some properties. Absent significant improvement in the broader economy, I expect the DMV real estate market to remain sluggish through 2027.

John Mentis is an Arlington-based Realtor® serving buyers and sellers throughout the DMV, combining market knowledge, strategic thinking, skilled negotiation and highly personal service.



Washingtonian's official "Face of Arlington Real Estate"
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NATALIE ROY

BICYCLING REALTY GROUP | KW METRO CENTER

The real estate market has ups and downs. This is not news; it is due to many factors ranging from the state of the economy and fluctuating interest rates to consumer confidence and housing inventory. The most common buyer question is, "Is this a good time to buy? For sellers, it's, "Is this the best time to sell?"" No one has a crystal ball. However, over the years even in economic uncertainty, this region has proved resilient.

Right now, in the Fall of 2026, some properties are sitting while others are flying off the shelf. Some describe the current climate as bi-polar. There are more opportunities to get a good deal on the buy side. On the selling side, homes selling quickly are smartly priced and presented well. One key to success in challenging times is enlisting the services of a seasoned real estate professional who can guide you through the process.



KIMBERLY CESTARI

LONG & FOSTER

The Market Is Changing. Experience Knows What to Do Next.

Real estate markets rarely turn all at once. They shift neighborhood by neighborhood, price point by price point and sometimes block by block. After decades in Washington real estate, I've learned to recognize those shifts early, and more importantly, what to do about them.

This fall, buyers have more choices and are increasingly selective. Homes that are thoughtfully prepared, beautifully presented, and strategically priced will command attention. Those that miss the mark may linger. In this market, you don't get a second chance to make a first impression or to choose the right price.

For sellers, yesterday's comparable sale is only part of the story. I'm equally focused on today's competition and what's coming tomorrow. My perspective comes not only from years of selling homes, but from renovating eight of my own, building one, and my background in interior design and marketing. I know what buyers notice, what they'll overlook, and where spending before you sell can and won't pay off.

For buyers, opportunity is returning, but perspective matters. I'm not interested in simply helping my clients win a house. I want them to make a smart real estate decision. The best purchase is one that works today and still makes sense years from now.

My Fall Foresight? Don't chase the market. Anticipate it.

As Long & Foster's No. 1 agent in both DC and Maryland, I've built my business on something no algorithm can replicate: experience, instinct, relationships, and **a distinctly local point of view.**

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SUSAN WISELY

COMPASS | NORTHERN VIRGINIA & DE BEACHES

In today's Northern Virginia market, navigating real estate requires looking past national headlines and focusing on local realities.

Right now, we are seeing a clear flight to quality. Today's buyers prioritize long-term value, smart layouts, and homes that align seamlessly with their lifestyle goals. My advice after 25 years advising clients? Strategy always beats trying to time the market. Waiting for interest rates or the "perfect moment" often leads to missed opportunities.

Above all, remember that "**how you live** and **how you sell**" are completely different. Living in a home is personal, but selling it requires a deliberate, strategic preparation process where nothing is left to chance — ensuring you sell quickly without leaving money on the table. *This is where I excel for every seller I represent.*

Real estate is deeply personal and built on trust. When you pair clear-eyed market insight with genuine care, you can move forward with total confidence.

Choose Wisely… before you make your move!



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THE SHORB TEAM

CORCORAN MCENEARNEY

The Shorb Team brings over 30 years of combined experience and deep roots serving Chevy Chase, Northwest DC, and the greater Washington metropolitan area. Led by Realtors Jack Shorb, Ellie Shorb, and Justin Kelley, and supported by Director of Operations Chloe Stringer, our collaborative team pairs hyper-local expertise with data-driven strategy and refined systems.

Ranked in the *RealTrends* Top 1.5% nationwide and recognized as *Washingtonian* and *Bethesda Magazine* Top Producers, our team has achieved over $444M+ in volume, helped 376 families, and maintained a 100.87% list-to-sale price ratio. Backed by Corcoran McEnearney, we deliver discreet, high-touch service and tailored guidance from initial conversation through closing and beyond.



LARRY "BOOMER" FOSTER

PAUL WESLEY REAL ESTATE

The real estate industry is changing rapidly. Consolidation is accelerating as large corporations acquire independent firms and merge with other industry giants. At the same time, artificial intelligence is transforming how companies operate and interact with consumers. Some of that change is inevitable. Much of it can be positive. But as our industry becomes bigger, more automated and more focused on efficiency, we must be careful not to lose sight of the people at the center of every transaction, our clients.

At Paul Wesley Real Estate, we believe buying or selling a home is far too important to become simply another transaction to optimize.

For most families, a home is their largest financial asset. But it is also much more than that. It represents security, memories, community and often a lifetime of hard work. Consumers navigating those decisions deserve an experienced human being sitting beside them—a highly trained professional who understands the market, provides thoughtful counsel, negotiates skillfully and places the client's interests ahead of their own. That philosophy also shapes how we view artificial intelligence.

We embrace AI enthusiastically, but we believe technology should enhance human relationships, not replace them. We use it to make our people smarter, our processes faster and our service better—freeing our professionals to spend more time advising, communicating and caring for clients.

In an industry increasingly driven by scale, consolidation and automation, Paul Wesley is choosing a better path.We believe the future of real estate should combine the very best technology with something technology cannot replicate: trusted relationships, human judgment and uncompromising service.

Because progress isn't about removing people from the process. It's about giving great people better tools to serve their clients and communities.

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THE DEB GRIFFIN TEAM

THE FACE OF HOME LENDING

Experience and expertise matter. Markets are constantly changing and strategies for purchasing and financing a home change too. A native of Montgomery County and 2nd generation Washingtonian with over 40 years-experience in mortgage lending, Deb Griffin of Chase in Washington, DC has worked with many homebuyers to help them purchase a home. Deb and her assistant, Lisa Bennett are excited to work with past borrowers as well as their children and grandchildren. Deb and her team specialize in lending to first-time homebuyers as well as self-employed buyers for primary, secondary and investment properties.

Licensed in all 50 states, Deb Griffin can lend anywhere. She has the experience of working with first-time homebuyers, new construction buyers, condo buyers, coop buyers and self-employed buyers. Chase Bank is a full-service bank and has branches in the DC, MD and VA areas as part of it's national footprint. In her spare time Deb runs marathons, serves on the board of the Montgomery County Road Runners and chases after her kids and three crazy Labrador retrievers.

All home lending products are subject to credit and property approval. Rates, program terms and conditions are subject to change without notice. Not all products are available in all states or for all amounts. Other restrictions and limitations apply. Home lending products provided by JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. Member FDIC ©2026 JPMorgan Chase & Co.



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PATRICIA & DAVID SMITH

COMPASS

For 20 years, David and Patty Smith have built their real estate business around a simple philosophy: exceptional market knowledge matters most when paired with truly personal guidance. Longtime DMV residents, the husband-and-wife team now serves clients throughout the Washington region and New York City, with more than $500 million in career sales.

Their advice for today's buyers and sellers is straightforward: don't try to time the market perfectly. Instead, understand the market you're in and make decisions that support your long-term goals. Life unfolds in chapters, and the right home and community should align with the chapter you're living now.

Interest rates, inventory and economic conditions will continually change, but informed decisions can create opportunities in any cycle.

Whether advising a first-time buyer or seasoned luxury client, David and Patty believe their role remains the same: provide knowledge, perspective and advocacy that empower each client to move forward with confidence.



JIM BELL

SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY EXECUTIVE IN WASHINGTON, DC AND LONDON

Jim Bell, Executive Vice President and Global Advisor at Sotheby's International Realty, has spent more than three decades guiding clients through the prime residential markets of Washington, DC and London. With roughly $1.2 billion in closed transactions, he is known among colleagues and clients alike as "The House Whisperer" — a reputation built on discretion, market fluency, and an instinct for matching people to place.

Bell founded Beasley Real Estate in 2012, growing it into the fifth-largest independent brokerage in Washington before joining Sotheby's. His London practice, established in 2016, now serves a transatlantic clientele drawn to both cities, and he serves as a consultant to United Kingdom Sotheby's International Realty, advising American buyers and sellers on the London market.

A former mortgage-backed securities trader, Bell brings a financier's eye to residential real estate, reading rate cycles and capital flows with the same fluency he brings to a Georgetown floor plan or a Belgravia mews. That perspective informs *Billion Dollar Broker*, his widely read newsletter on the forces shaping luxury housing, followed by thousands of buyers, sellers, and industry insiders.

Beyond the business, Bell is an Emmy Award–winning documentary filmmaker whose film *Somerville* reflects the same curiosity about people and place that defines his work with clients. A longtime civic leader, he has served on the boards of the Washington National Opera and the Georgetown Club.

Whether you are buying or selling in Washington or London, Jim Bell welcomes your call.

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CATHY BECKETT

COLDWELL BANKER REALTY

Growing up in Northern Virginia, I followed in the footsteps of my mother, a REALTOR® for 37 years. Her example, along with my own experiences, taught me that real estate is about much more than homes—it's about people, relationships and life transitions.

As I look ahead, I believe personal connection will become even more valuable. Technology provides incredible information, but it cannot replace experience, professional insight and the personal guidance of a trusted advisor.

I am deeply committed to providing exceptional, hands-on service to first-time buyers, move-up buyers, downsizers and luxury clients. I'm especially proud that my business thrives on referrals—a reflection of the trust and relationships I've built over the years.

Markets and technology will continue to evolve, but the greatest reward remains unchanged: seeing my clients smile, knowing they made the right decision, and being trusted to guide them home.



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JOHN PYNE

EVP, REGIONAL MANAGER
ATLANTIC BAY MORTGAGE GROUP

This year reinforced what I've long believed: a mortgage is only one piece of a much bigger financial strategy.

After more than 20 years in mortgage banking and over $1 billion in funded loans, I've learned to start with a client's financial goals and work backward to the mortgage. In the Washington metropolitan area, where home prices are higher and financial situations are often more complex, that may mean preserving cash reserves, reducing high-interest debt, or choosing a loan structure that better supports long-term wealth. The best financing decisions consider cash flow, liquidity, future goals, and the mortgage together, not in isolation.

Today's market rewards buyers who recognize opportunity. Seller concessions, temporary rate buydowns, and stronger negotiating power have created options we simply didn't have a few years ago. Looking ahead, artificial intelligence will continue to make the mortgage process faster and more efficient, giving a greater opportunity to educate, solve complex financial challenges, and deliver strategic advice technology can't replicate.

The mortgage isn't the product. The financial strategy is.



CHUCK MANGOLD, JR.

ASSOCIATE BROKER
BENSON AND MANGOLD

For 25 years, Chuck Mangold, Jr. has built his real estate career around one principle: there is no substitute for knowing your market. A lifelong Talbot County resident and Associate Broker with Benson & Mangold, Chuck has represented more than 1,500 transactions totaling over $1 billion in combined real estate volume across Maryland's Mid-Shore.

His experience spans everything from homes in town and rural properties to commercial real estate and some of the Eastern Shore's most distinctive waterfront estates. Through changing markets, new technology, and evolving buyer expectations, Chuck believes the fundamentals of successful real estate remain remarkably consistent: accurate pricing, strong presentation, broad exposure, skilled negotiation, and honest advice.

Technology has transformed how properties are marketed and how buyers begin their search, but Chuck sees local expertise becoming more important, not less. Online data can tell buyers and sellers a great deal about a property. It cannot fully account for the nuances of a particular creek, neighborhood, town, property type, or even one side of a transaction versus another. That knowledge is built through years of experience.

Looking ahead, Chuck expects technology and artificial intelligence to make the industry increasingly efficient, particularly in marketing, research, and analysis. But he believes real estate will remain fundamentally relationship-driven. The best agents will be those who use new tools without losing the judgment, responsiveness, and personal service clients rely on when making significant financial decisions.

Deeply connected to the community he serves, Chuck has served on the boards of numerous local organizations, including the Academy Art Museum, Saints Peter & Paul School, Habitat Choptank, The Country School, the Talbot County Chamber of Commerce, and the Mid-Shore Board of REALTORS®.

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JAIME WILLIS

COMPASS

Downsizing With a Plan

One of the biggest trends I'm seeing is the number of people considering a downsize. For families who have lived in their homes for decades—or even generations—the transition can feel overwhelming.

Having a trusted, full-service advisor can make the difference between a stressful move and a meaningful, grounded process.

I help clients build a plan years before moving and project-manage the process from idea to closing: identifying high-ROI repairs and renovations, coordinating contractors, managing estate sales and donations, and preparing the home for market.

Starting early also gives you time to explore where you're going next and make thoughtful financial decisions rather than rushed ones. With my legal background, I can also help connect you with the right legal and financial professionals to minimize taxes and protect your estate.

Downsizing doesn't have to become a second job. With the right guidance, you can protect your equity and confidently embrace what's next.



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MATT CHENEY

REALTOR® | COMPASS

With over two decades' experience navigating DC and nearby Virginia and Maryland real estate, Matt Cheney is widely respected as an exceptional leader in all aspects of today's luxury home sales. A trusted client advocate, Matt has skillfully guided buyers and sellers through over a thousand successful transactions. His calm personality and razor-sharp negotiation prowess ensure success in an increasingly competitive high-end market.

Those who partner with Matt benefit from his savvy marketing skills, discretion, and vast local knowledge. His promotional toolkit includes effective online marketing and targeted social media placement. In addition, his passion for video production brings next-level exposure to his sellers' properties.

Licensed in Washington D.C., Maryland and Virginia, Matt has been ranked by Real Trends as an agent in the top 1.5% of agents nationally by production and is consistently recognized as a top producer by the *Washingtonian, Arlington, Bethesda,* and *DC* magazines.

Matt was raised in Bethesda. He lives in Wesley Heights with his wife, Natalia, their two daughters, Penelope and Charlie, and their chocolate lab, Duke.



MORGAN C. GILLIGAN

VICE PRESIDENT-DIVISION MANAGER STEWART TITLE GUARANTY COMPANY MID-ATLANTIC COMMERCIAL

I have been in the commercial real estate business for more than 25 years, and if there is one thing I have learned, it is that no two cycles are ever quite the same. Just when you think you have seen everything, the market has a way of reminding you that there is always something new to learn.

The past few years have certainly tested all of us. Higher interest rates, changing valuations, tighter lending standards and general economic uncertainty have made getting transactions across the finish line more difficult. There has been plenty of capital on the sidelines, but there has also been a great deal of patience as buyers and sellers try to determine where values ultimately settle.

Today, I am cautiously optimistic. We are seeing more activity, more conversations and, most importantly, more willingness to move forward. Certain sectors are performing better than others, and every market has its own story, but there seems to be a growing recognition that we cannot wait for everything to be perfect before doing business again.

Over the years, I have learned not to put too much weight on any one forecast. Interest rates will move, administrations will change, capital will come and go, and different asset classes will have their moment. What has remained consistent are good properties, good sponsors, strong relationships and people willing to work through complicated transactions together.

I certainly do not have a crystal ball, but I remain encouraged by what I am seeing. My sense is that we are moving into a healthier period for commercial real estate—not necessarily an easier one, but perhaps a more disciplined one.

Sometimes experience teaches you that the most important thing is simply to stay close to your customers, listen more than you talk, remain patient and be ready when the opportunity presents itself.

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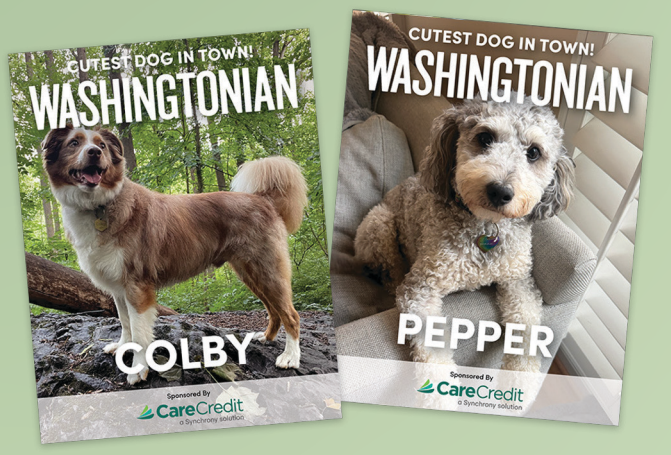
WASHINGTONIAN

Cutest Dog

PHOTO CONTEST



All entrants will receive a personalized digital faux cover.



The winning dogs will receive a full page feature in *Washingtonian*.

Launching October 6 at:

washingtonian.com/cutestdog



Featuring guest judge, **Jonathan Wainberg**, SVP and GM, Pet and Co-Brand, CareCredit

Contest Beneficiary:

Lucky Dog Animal Rescue

Sponsored by:

CareCredit
a Synchrony solution

LIFE, TRAVEL & HEALTH



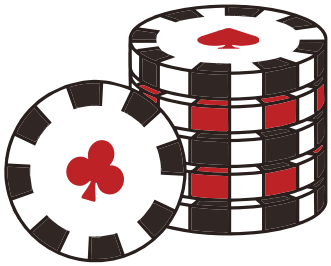
BET ON IT
Test your luck at area casinos such as the Rose Gaming Resort in Dumfries, Virginia.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ROSE GAMING RESORT

Lucky Break

These nearby gaming destinations are a good bet for poker, table games, horseracing wagers, and other winning entertainment

By Daniella Byck





MGM NATIONAL HARBOR

Oxon Hill

A Las Vegas–like mini Sphere may be coming to National Harbor in a few years. That's still in the proposal phase, but you can channel Sin City at the casino in the meantime: table games; slot machines; betting counters and kiosks; horserace betting; and an outdoor gaming space spanning more than 6,400 square feet. Recent renovations to the splashy High Limit area doubled the number of slot machines and updated the table games. The property's luxe hotel means you can stay up late within walking distance of your bed, and the large spa and salon is a destination for daytime relaxation. A theater hosts concerts and comedians, and the ten bars and eateries range from a steakhouse by *Top Chef* alums Bryan and Michael Voltaggio to casual Shake Shack.

Drive time from DC: 15 minutes

THE ROSE GAMING RESORT

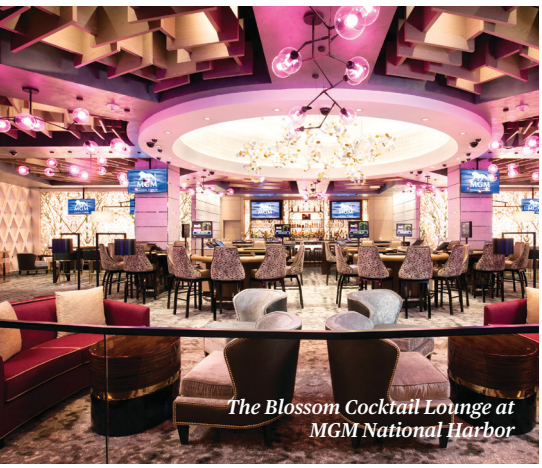
Dumfries, Va.

Just two years old, this destination is best known for having over 1,500 historical horseracing terminals that use results from past races and feature large jackpots. In fact, a February win of $1,014,879 on a 25-cent bet at the Rose is believed to be the largest-ever historical horseracing jackpot in the country. While there's no table play, you can find other games as well as smoking and nonsmoking areas. Restaurants include a surf-and-turf spot, Southern fare, and a sports bar that hosts weekly trivia, karaoke, and salsa nights. After an evening of wagers, you can crash at the casino's hotel, with more than 100 rooms.

Drive time from DC: 40 minutes



Drive times are from the Washington Monument.



The Blossom Cocktail Lounge at MGM National Harbor



Cigars are welcome in the Orchid Patio at Live! Casino & Hotel.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF CASINOS



Play slots, blackjack, and more at the Rose Gaming Resort.

LIVE! CASINO & HOTEL

Hanover, Md.

More than 3,000 slot machines fill the casino floor with colorful lights and sit amid nearly 200 table games. A poker room hosts the annual Maryland State Poker Championship, and when the stakes are high, you can get a massage at the table to decompress. The casino has a FanDuel Sportsbook with a massive 100-foot wraparound screen, a cigar-friendly gaming lounge, and a concert venue. Restaurants are undergoing a multiyear revamp—including a planned makeover for the Prime Rib—and a recent addition is a branch of the Vietnamese spot Truong Tien, an Eden Center favorite. The 310-room hotel features 50 suites plus a spa for massages, facials, and other pampering. There's also a Live! Casino location in Petersburg, Virginia, half an hour south of Richmond.

Drive time from DC: 45 minutes

HORSESHOE BALTIMORE

Baltimore

Though smaller than some of the other options, this casino tends to be less crowded. Beyond blackjack, roulette, and 1,400-plus slot machines, sports fans can check out the Caesars Sportsbook, with 22.5-foot-tall screens, plus over a dozen betting kiosks. The casino also has a dedicated poker room that hosts a World Series of Poker tour stop and off-track horse betting. There are a few restaurants—including a steakhouse from Gordon Ramsay—but no affiliated hotel.

Drive time from DC: One hour



Table games at Horseshoe Baltimore



The concert venue at Hollywood Casino in Charles Town

HOLLYWOOD CASINO CHARLES TOWN RACES

Charles Town, W. Va.

The standout feature at this spot? A live racetrack. The no-frills course is a fun chance to watch wagers in action. In the casino, the gaming area has poker tables, 1,400 slots, and a sportsbook with pub fare and a Jumbotron. The Inn at Charles Town, the casino's official lodging, offers free shuttles between the racetrack, club, and other hotels. For more to do, the theater calendar is packed with standup acts, tributes to icons such as Dolly Parton and Elvis, and even a live version of *The Price Is Right*.

Drive time from DC: One hour and 15 minutes W

PHOTOGRAPH ON LEFT BY DAVE BURK; RIGHT COURTESY OF HOLLYWOOD CASINO CHARLES TOWN RACES

Johns Hopkins Sullivan Breast Center at Sibley Memorial Hospital

TOP DOCTORS | BREAST CANCER
COMPREHENSIVE BREAST CARE, CLOSE TO HOME



Breast health decisions deserve expert guidance, advanced technology and compassionate support. At the Sullivan Breast Center at Sibley Memorial Hospital, part of the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center, patients in the Greater Washington area have access to comprehensive breast care delivered by a multidisciplinary team dedicated to prevention, early detection, diagnosis, treatment and survivorship.

Patients benefit from one of the program's greatest strengths: a multidisciplinary breast cancer team that brings together breast imaging specialists, breast surgeons, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, genetic counselors, rehabilitation experts and patient navigators in one coordinated program. This collaborative approach ensures that every patient benefits from personalized care tailored to their individual needs, while also having access to the clinical expertise and innovation of Johns Hopkins Medicine.

Excellence in Breast Imaging and Diagnosis

Early detection plays a critical role in improving outcomes, and the Sullivan Breast Center is committed to providing exceptional screening and diagnostic services. The breast imaging team of Dr. Pouneh Razavi, Dr. Sandra Alcira Mitre Polin and Dr. Sara Daniel Shaylor delivers expert breast screening and diagnostic imaging, combining advanced technology with specialized expertise to support early detection and accurate diagnosis. Recognizing early detection is key, every mammogram is performed using 3-D tomosynthesis and incorporates AI for interpretation at no cost to the patient. Designated a Center of Excellence for Breast Imaging by the American College of Radiology, the center offers advanced digital breast imaging interpreted by fellowship-trained radiologists who specialize in breast health. Patients also have access to comprehensive genetic counseling and testing services, helping individuals better understand their genetic cancer risks, make informed screening decisions and guide treatment planning, when appropriate.

Personalized Surgical Treatment from Experienced Specialists

For patients facing a breast cancer diagnosis, the center's experienced surgical team provides compassionate guidance and individualized treatment plans. The surgical team, comprised of Washingtonian Top Doctors, Dr. Maureen O'Donnell-DeBritz and Dr. Hanh-Tam Tran, is recognized by their peers for excellence in breast surgery and patient care. Surgeons work closely with patients to discuss all available options and determine the best approach based on the patient's diagnosis, goals and preferences.

Specialized expertise includes breast-conserving surgery, nerve preservation, nipple-sparing mastectomy, prophylactic mastectomy, sentinel lymph node biopsy and oncoplastic techniques that help optimize both cancer treatment and cosmetic outcomes. Close collaboration with reconstructive surgeons, medical oncologists and radiation oncologists ensures coordinated care throughout the treatment journey.

Supporting Patients Throughout Treatment and Recovery

Exceptional care extends far beyond medical treatment alone. Dedicated nurse navigators can answer questions and help patients and families coordinate care and access resources throughout every stage of their journey. The Breast Cancer Rehabilitation Program further supports patients from pre-surgical planning through survivorship. Through specialized oncology rehabilitation services, patients receive support to improve recovery, maintain function and enhance quality of life before, during and after treatment.

SPECIALIZATION

Breast imaging, screening and diagnostic mammography, image-guided breast biopsy, breast cancer surgery, nipple-sparing and oncoplastic procedures, medical oncology, radiation oncology, high-risk breast care, genetic counseling and testing, breast cancer rehabilitation, survivorship support and multidisciplinary cancer care.

DESIGNATIONS, AFFILIATIONS, and AWARDS

A multidisciplinary breast program home to *Washingtonian* Top Doctors Dr. Maureen O'Donnell-DeBritz and Dr. Hanh-Tam Tran and dedicated breast radiologists, featuring genetic counseling, nurse navigation, rehabilitation and coordinated cancer care. Part of the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center; Sullivan Breast Center at Sibley Memorial Hospital; Center of Excellence for Breast Imaging by the American College of Radiology.



Sullivan Breast Center at Sibley Memorial Hospital
5255 Loughboro Road NW, Washington, DC 20016
Breast Imaging: 202-519-0443
Breast Biopsy Scheduling: 202-804-9289
Breast Surgery: 202-930-8493
Hopkins.org/SibleyBreastCare

Scan to Learn More

Surviving Together

They're husband and wife. They've both been diagnosed with breast cancer.

By Daniella Byck



SCREEN SAVER: Tammy Freeman-Burton and Louis Burton now get annual mammograms together.

WHEN FORT WASHINGTON RESIDENT Tammy Freeman-Burton was diagnosed with stage III breast cancer in 2023, it wasn't the first time she and her husband, Louis Burton, had dealt with this type of illness. Six years earlier, Burton was diagnosed with stage II breast cancer. His was a rare case: Fewer than 1 percent of men are diagnosed with breast cancer, compared with 13 percent of women. Burton was shocked to claim that statistic.

"It was hard to just accept that it's happening to me," he says.

Burton first noticed bloodstains on his shirt after church. His wife, a nurse, recommended reaching out to a doctor. Although a mammogram and ultrasound came back negative, a biopsy revealed dime-size pieces of cancer in his right breast. Burton underwent a mastectomy, and three days later, weighed down by a drain bag, he returned to work.

"I was angry," he says. "I just didn't want to talk about it because I felt, *a man has breast cancer*. It was overwhelming to me, so I just got in my little zone, and I said, *Well, I'm just gonna keep moving forward*."

Burton and Freeman-Burton, who has a history of breast cancer in her family, started getting mammograms together. It's a regular date: coffee, screenings, and a thumbs-up selfie to mark the moment. But a year after Burton completed hormone therapy to keep the cancer at bay, the doctor found a mass in Freeman-Burton's right breast. The physician told them to return for a biopsy in a few hours.

They drove to Hains Point and looked out on the water. Less than a month earlier, she'd been sitting by the ocean in Belize. Now everything felt so different from that carefree vacation. Soon after, the biopsy confirmed it: Freeman-Burton had breast cancer.

"It is still not comprehensible," she says. "My husband and I both?"

She underwent a bilateral partial mastectomy, and the team discovered stage 0 cancer in her left breast during surgery. Freeman-Burton's treatment has included two rounds of chemotherapy and 30 rounds of radiation followed by oral chemotherapy, and now a hormone therapy clinical trial to fight recurrence. She has also undergone a DIEP flap reconstructive surgery.

"It has been a trip I didn't ask to go on," Freeman-Burton says. "I have this luggage, and I'm constantly unpacking things that I didn't ask for. The pain. The emotional piece."

Just as she took care of Burton during his battle, he played the role of caretaker. There is comfort in a partner who can relate firsthand. "It was helpful because Lou understood the shock factor," she says. "That's my safety net."

Soon after her diagnosis, Freeman-Burton attended Making Strides Against Breast Cancer, an annual October walk around the Tidal Basin organized by the American Cancer Society. She found the experience inspiring and decided to form a team to raise money for the next event. ACS approached Freeman-Burton to see if her husband would be a Faces of Hope Ambassador, one of a cohort of survivors selected to share their story. "I was like, 'Louis is not going to do this.' " To her surprise, Burton was ready to go public, and Freeman-Burton became an ambassador, too. Together the couple speaks out about the importance of breast-cancer screenings for both men and women.

"I believe our assignments are to make people aware what's going on with their bodies, get screenings, get themselves checked," Burton says. And to "let them know that they're not alone." W



PHOTOGRAPHS BY EVY MAGES



Making Strides Against Breast Cancer of DC at the Tidal Basin, October 17, 2026, 9 a.m.

We invite you to join forces with the American Cancer Society – the nation's nonprofit leader in the breast cancer fight. Join the Making Strides movement to help end breast cancer as we know it, for everyone.

Sign up or donate

MakingStridesWalk.org/washingtondc

American Cancer Society®

MAKING STRIDES AGAINST BREAST CANCER®



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ADVANCED BREAST CANCER CARE:

Virginia Cancer Specialists Improves Lives Through Personalization, Collaboration, and Research

By Vivienne Stearns-Elliott



ANMOL SINGH, MD



MATTHEW HUEMAN, MD

For women and men on a breast cancer journey, Virginia Cancer Specialists offers the most optimistic, advanced, comprehensive, and personalized approach to breast cancer treatment.

Not only are the breast care specialty physicians expertly trained, but their emphasis on research, clinical trials, and collaborative care between the medical oncologists and the breast surgeons provides the most reassuring approach.

"We're at the forefront of it all," says medical oncologist Anmol Singh, M.D., of Virginia Cancer Specialists. "We bring cutting-edge treatments to our patients. It's very important to know the newest available treatments. We can address almost every scenario our patients bring us. A breast cancer diagnosis is always distressing, but there's a lot of optimism and hope."

Virginia Cancer Specialists breast surgeon Matthew Hueman, M.D., agrees, "My passion lies in the opportunity to individualize every patient's treatment and knowing when to de-escalate treatment. Not everyone needs chemotherapy. We have immune therapies, targeted therapies, and the latest clinical trials. Every patient is unique. Better treatment doesn't always mean more treatment."

Dr. Singh says, "Sometimes delivering chemotherapy upfront can shrink the breast tumor so there are no microscopic cancer cells left behind, and we can use that information to determine subsequent steps."

"For selected patients, genomic testing of the cancer itself can help predict the risk of recurrence and whether chemotherapy is likely to provide meaningful benefit. This allows some patients to safely avoid chemotherapy and its side effects. We're getting better at identifying which patients need more or less therapy," says Dr. Hueman. "We help patients understand the pros, cons, and subtle benefits of treatment choices so they can decide their path forward. An increasing number of women don't need lymph node surgery. For those who do, we have a non-invasive way to detect early fluid in the arm to mitigate the risk of lymphedema."

"There are incredible advances in breast preservation and reconstruction. For women who need or choose mastectomy, specialized breast and plastic surgeons can offer advanced nipple-sparing and nerve-sparing mastectomy and complex reconstruction, including DIEP flap reconstruction, so that women can continue to look and feel like themselves after treatment. Increasingly targeted approaches, including partial-breast rather than whole-breast radiation for selected women, can further reduce treatment and side effects. We are preserving more breast tissue, using nipple-sparing techniques, and planning ahead with the cosmetic surgeon by doing surgery in a cosmetically sensitive way. Maintaining a woman's body image is an incredibly important part of what we do. Most women can have lumpectomy and keep their breasts safely," says Dr. Hueman.

"The reason I come to work every day," says Dr. Singh, "is thanks to today's advances and witnessing so many successes, while still understanding that there is still so much to learn and research within this disease."

"They become part of our family at Virginia Cancer Specialists. We follow them closely," says Dr. Hueman.

To contact Virginia Cancer Specialists or for an appointment, call **571-350-8400** or go to **VirginiaCancerSpecialists.com.**



STANDING, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Matthew T. Hueman, MD, FACS, FSSO; David Weintritt, MD, FACS; Hernan Vargas, MD, FACS.
SITTING, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Stephanie Akbari, MD, FACS; Elizabeth Feldman, MD, FACS; Lindy Rosal, MD, FACS.

PRECISION
in every decision.

COMPASSION
in every moment.

EXCELLENCE
in every outcome.

When you choose **The Comprehensive Breast Center at Virginia Cancer Specialists**, you're choosing world-class, board-certified **Breast Cancer Surgeons**, all of whom are peer-nominated Castle Connolly Top Doctors—among the top 7% of practicing physicians in the country.

You're choosing a partner you can **TRUST**.

Breast Cancer Surgeons play a critical role in the treatment of breast cancer and complex breast diseases. That's why it's critical to choose a highly experienced surgeon who specializes in breast surgery. While many general surgeons occasionally operate on patients with breast cancer, research is clear that patients have better outcomes if their surgeries are performed by breast surgeons, who perform a high volume of breast-specific procedures[1].

When it matters most, choose wisely.

Virginia Cancer Specialists

COMPREHENSIVE BREAST CENTER

VirginiaCancerSpecialists.com | 571.350.8400

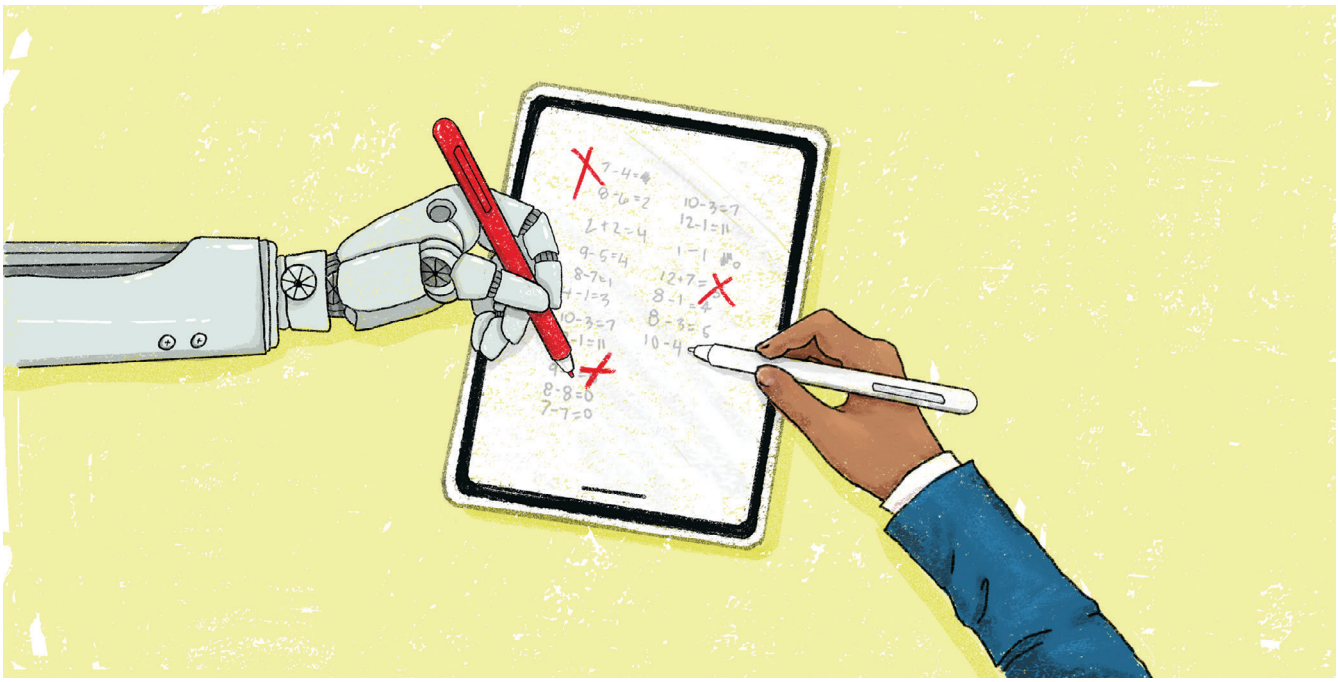
Alexandria | Alexandria (Old Town) | Arlington | Bristow | Fair Oaks | Fairfax | Fauquier | Loudoun | Reston | Woodbridge

Source 1: Sainsbury R, Haward B, Rider L, Johnston C, Round C. Influence of clinician workload and patterns of treatment on survival from breast cancer. Lancet. 1995; 345: 1265-1270.

Machine Learning

Artificial intelligence has entered the classroom, forcing local private schools to figure out how to treat the technology

By Damare Baker



ARTIFICIAL-INTELLIGENCE COMPANIES are marketing tools directly to schools and school-age kids, and the technology is becoming a regular part of education. For example, Google Classroom, a class-management portal for assignments, grades, and more, comes with Gemini built in, and ChatGPT recently launched a version for teens.

Whether or not academic institutions are ready, AI now has a direct pipeline into many classrooms. For area private schools, that means not just figuring out policies that address AI use but also being ready to respond quickly to the evolving technology.

Jennifer Steele, an education-policy researcher at American University, says that while schools may have an ad hoc approach, it isn't chaos. Teacher autonomy, or letting individual instructors figure out what works best for their subject and students, is more consistent with what private schools sell than a top-down ban.

For a sense of how that manifests from place to place, just look at the local landscape. Some schools are restrictive: At Georgetown Day School, AI is prohibited by default—a policy embedded in the academic-integrity section of the student-parent handbook. Kids must get permission from their teachers to use "any external source, website, or app," including generative artificial intelligence. On the other end of the spectrum is the Alpha School, with campuses in Bethesda and Chantilly. Under the supervision of human "guides," students study core subjects for just two hours a day using adaptive-learning platforms, AI tutors, and personalized lesson plans. They spend the rest of the day in workshops, learning skills such as public speaking and coding.

Other schools encourage students to use the technology as an aid rather than a teacher. Saint James School in Hagerstown has a two-part policy outlining approved uses, which include creating study guides or practicing foreign-language conversation skills. It also outlines how AI use might violate the honor code. In a blog post, associate headmaster Kimberly Kingry wrote that the school created the policy to "embrace this emerging technology and teach students how to be responsible users rather than approach this as . . . something that would always be an infraction."

At some schools, policies are being formed in partnership with the pupils. Holton-Arms in Bethesda has a student-led AI Innovators Club that holds workshops to mentor peers and teachers on ethical ways to use AI inside and outside of the classroom. They cover tools such as Gemini, MagicSchool, and Wayground, and the school emphasizes that AI should serve as an assistant rather than a crutch.

"Being a member of AI Innovators has given me the opportunity to explore the creative and academic applications of AI in our school community," says Fiona Mehta, a junior at Holton-Arms. "AI is becoming an increasingly ubiquitous part of how students learn, and understanding how to use it responsibly can help students and teachers to view AI as a tool for

ILLUSTRATION BY ALINA SPATZ

learning rather than a replacement for critical thinking."

Steele says the core concern is that kids will offload learning to AI instead of doing the work themselves if schools aren't teaching them how to use it responsibly. "Schools need to teach the metacognitive skills of prioritizing the effort of learning and understanding when you're using AI as a tutor to help you understand hard questions," she says, "versus when you're using it so you don't have to think."

Even as they grapple with new technology, private schools still do offer smaller class sizes and more personalized attention. "In the age of AI, the premium product is human," says Steele. Teachers are now tasked with helping students understand whether they're using AI as a helpful tutor or to outsource their thinking. (It's a hazier line for those born and raised in the age of AI.) That includes teaching kids to ask themselves, "Could I explain this work?" AI or not, it's the type of question that drives learning. W



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wonder
grow

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Ages 2–6 years

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SCHOOL PROFILES

FINDING THE RIGHT PRIVATE SCHOOL FOR YOUR FAMILY



Choosing a school is an important decision that impacts your child's development. Study the following profiles to educate yourself about the myriad of school institution options and learning opportunities available in the Washington region.



QUICK LOOK

AGES
2 years old - Kindergarten
ENROLLMENT
160
STUDENT/FACULTY
6:1 – varies by age
TUITION
$5,088 (Two half-day classes) through $19,261 (Kindergarten)



GENEVA DAY SCHOOL

Geneva Day School
Encouraging a lifelong love of learning
Ages 2 through Kindergarten

Encouraging a lifelong love of learning! As Potomac's hidden gem, Geneva Day School provides excellent classes and extraordinary programs for children aged two through kindergarten. Join as a two. . . This nurturing and innovative school grows with you. Many students maintain lifelong relationships and a number of graduates enroll their children so as to grant the gift of a Geneva education.

What creates such a following? The Geneva Method, which promotes student-led discovery of traditional pre-academics, stellar instruction from passionate, highly trained staff, and inspiring settings in which to learn and play. . . . An irresistible formula. Geneva's enriching, academic curriculum is powered by STEAM (science-technology-engineering-arts-math) and includes specialized Art, Environmental Education, Mindfulness, Music, and Physical Education. An "outdoor classroom" presides over gorgeous, Maryland Green School grounds, often visited by the very butterflies that serve as the school's mascot.

Every June, its award-winning Summer Camp for Young Children welcomes both new and returning campers. Over the course of nine weeks, campers are guided through a discovery of thrilling themes which may include "Farm Fun," "Outer Space," "Jurassic Park," and "Stars and Stripes."

Whether skipping stones at the nearby creek, conducting a science experiment, or painting according to artistic inspiration, Geneva students (and campers!) hold a lifelong love of learning in their hands. . . And hearts.

11931 Seven Locks Road, Potomac, MD 20854
301.340.7704 | **www.genevadayschool.org**

QUICK LOOK

ADMISSIONS
301.229.6108
GRADES
PreK - Grade 12
ENROLLMENT
260 Students
STUDENT/FACULTY
7:1
ACCREDITATION
AIMS, AWSNA, WECAN



WASHINGTON WALDORF SCHOOL

WASHINGTON Waldorf School

Educating creative problem solvers in the age of AI. Washington Waldorf School offers hands-on learning with no classroom screentime from PreK–Grade 5 and thoughtfully limited tech in Grades 6-12, plus a farm-to-table lunch program and ample time outdoors. From wonder, to discovery, to intellectual rigor, WWS meets the whole student with a developmentally driven curriculum. As a top-rated PreK-12 school, WWS prepares graduates for top colleges and meaningful careers in a wide range of fields.

4800 Sangamore Rd, Bethesda, MD 20816
washingtonwaldorf.org

QUICK LOOK

ADMISSIONS
Year Round Enrollment
Spaces Available
AGES
2-5
ENROLLMENT
25-30 per campus; small personalized classes
STEM BASED EDUCATION WITH A MONTESSORI FOUNDATION



NORTHEAST STARS MONTESSORI

NORTHEAST STARS
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697 N. Washington St, Alexandria, VA 22314 | 703.945.0408
nestars.net

QUICK LOOK

ADMISSIONS
202.387.2700
GRADES
15 months–Grade 6
OPEN HOUSES
October 16, 2026
November 11, 2026
January 9, 2027



AIDAN MONTESSORI SCHOOL

At Aidan Montessori School, we have high expectations for our students' education. We want it to challenge their minds, build their independence, and strengthen their connection to the world around them. That kind of education is possible only with Aidan's exceptional faculty, programs, and experiences. Aidan's legacy of academic excellence shines through a robust alumni network and outplacement at the region's most selective upper schools. Founded in 1961, Aidan is Washington's oldest Montessori school, and accredited by AIMS and recognized by Association Montessori International (AMI-USA).

2700 27th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008
admissions@aidanschool.org | **aidanschool.org**

QUICK LOOK

ADMISSIONS
703.356.1920
GRADES
Preschool – Grade 8
STUDENT/FACULTY
7:1 ratio
AFTER SCHOOL/BUS
Extended day program from 3:00-6:00 p.m. and bus service available



THE LANGLEY SCHOOL

The Langley School fosters purposeful inquiry-based and social-emotional learning for children in preschool through grade 8 in a joyful, connected community. Since our founding in 1942, The Langley School has empowered all students as curious, confident, and resilient leaders, thinkers, and creators who are prepared to thrive in the nation's top high schools and beyond. **Admission Information Sessions: October 14, October 28, December 9, January 6.**

1411 Balls Hill Road, McLean, Virginia
admission@langleyschool.org | **langleyschool.org**

QUICK LOOK

GRADES
6–12
ENROLLMENT
300
FOUNDING
1968
ADMISSIONS
burkeschool.org/apply
OPEN HOUSES
October 17 & November 21



EDMUND BURKE SCHOOL

Burke combines academic rigor, experiential learning, and civic engagement. We're a city school, and the city is our classroom, where students build their independence and self-knowledge. Burke students pursue subjects at a high level, from microbiology to French literature to robotics, while having space to explore new interests and engage in their school community. We hold students to high expectations and find the challenges that motivate them as individual learners.

4101 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008
admissions@burkeschool.org | **burkeschool.org**

QUICK LOOK

ADMISSIONS
301.767.3807
GRADES
Age 2 through Grade 12
ENROLLMENT
460
OPEN HOUSE
11/6/26: Preschool (2 - 4)
1/15/27: K through Grade 12
3/12/27: Preschool (2 to 4)



GERMAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL WASHINGTON D.C.

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QUICK LOOK

GRADES
- Co-ed: Pre-K–Kindergarten
- All Girls: Grades 1-12

SPECIAL PROGRAMS
Network Exchange Program
Social Action
STEM
Global Studies Certificates
Project Approach

ADMISSIONS
301.657.4322



STONE RIDGE

STONE RIDGE School of the Sacred Heart

Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart is an all-girls Catholic, independent, college preparatory school for Grades 1–12, with a co-ed Pre-K and Kindergarten. Part of a global network of Sacred Heart schools, we empower young women to lead and serve through lives of purpose that integrate faith, intellect, community, social action, and personal growth. With rigorous academics, championship athletics, and exceptional arts programs, our students thrive at every level. Discover Stone Ridge today–join us for an upcoming Open House.

9101 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20814
admissions@stoneridgeschool.org | **stoneridgeschool.org**

QUICK LOOK

ADMISSIONS
202.333.6571

GRADES
18 months–5 years

ENROLLMENT
80

COST
$27,707 Morning-Only
$33,434 Full-Day



LITTLE FOLKS SCHOOL

Little Folks School

Little Folks School is a diverse and joyful community; a place where all are seen and valued. Through play and the arts we foster young children's growing sense of responsibility, independence and cooperation. Small class sizes allow for individualized, differentiated instruction focusing on each child's affinities, strengths, and needs. Serving children ages eighteen months to five years old, our mixed-age classrooms provide a unique space for inspiring a child's natural curiosity and creative expression.

3247 Q Street, NW Washington, DC (Georgetown)
littlefolks@littlefolks.org | **littlefolks.org**

QUICK LOOK

ADMISSIONS
301.244.3600

GRADES
3-12 Silver Spring
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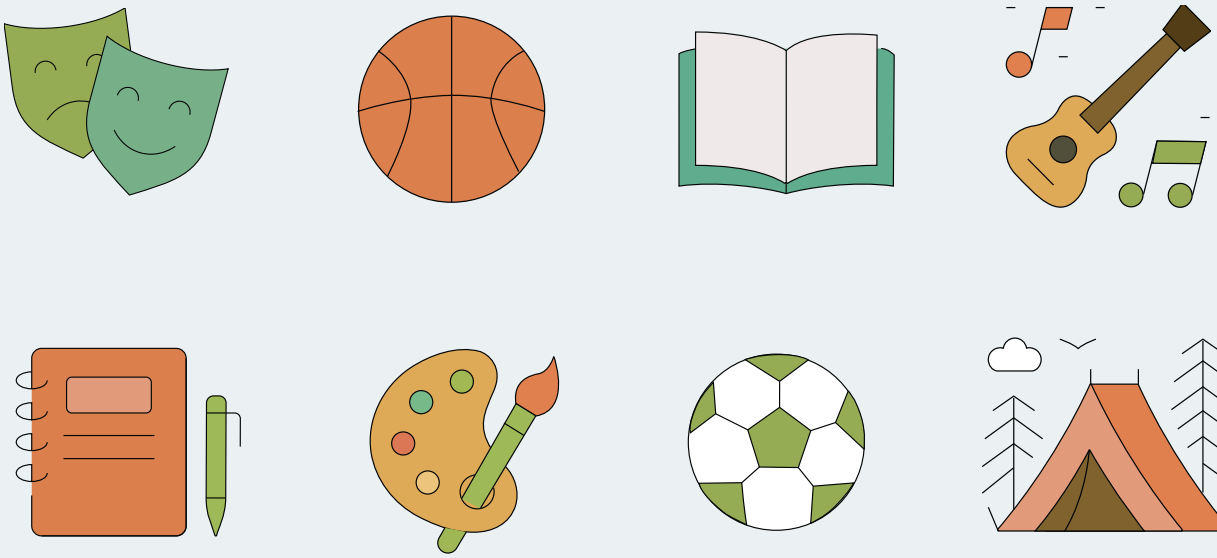

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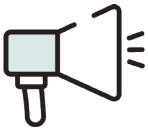

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TASTE



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF HASAN KALE

DON'T EAT THIS! *Hasan Kale—a.k.a. "Microangelo"—creates tiny works of art on popcorn kernels and other foods.* *Turn to page 142 for more.*

Highly Sated

Dig into our critic's 11 favorite comfort dishes

By Ann Limpert



Find the perfect club sandwich at Eebee's in Shaw.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRANDY HOLDER

Club Sandwich

Where: Eebee's Corner Bar
1840 Sixth St., NW

Flawless construction is essential to a great club sandwich, and Emily Brown, proprietor of this cozy (and still wildly popular) Shaw bar was obsessed with getting it right. "Certain stacking leads to motion and sliding," she says. Plus, how can you pre-salt the tomatoes without drying them, or toast the bread but never have it cut the roof of a customer's mouth? It took Brown six months to nail the two-layer turkey-and-bacon sandwich, and it's a masterpiece.

Buffalo Chicken Dip

Where: Upstate FTW
1314 U St., NW

Scott Drewno hates ranch dressing. In fact, the chef and Syracuse native considered adding a surcharge for it at Upstate FTW, which serves the area's best Buffalo wings. "Where I'm from, we eat Buffalo wings, we eat blue cheese," he says. Cooler heads—meaning chef/partner Danny Lee—prevailed. ("Bro, we cannot do that.") Drewno's Buffalo dip is based on a recipe cribbed from his sister. Thanks to plenty of Frank's hot sauce plus cream cheese, fontina, and, yes, ranch dressing, the dip has the perfect balance of richness, umami, and tang. What sets it apart, though, is that the chicken is not a shreddy afterthought you try to avoid. "Being cheffy, we use brined chicken thighs," Drewno says.

Arancini

Where: Rosselli
1100 New York Ave., NW

Earlier this year, restaurateur Ashok Bajaj flipped his Italian restaurant Modena into . . . another Italian restaurant, called Rosselli. It's the third Bajaj Italian dining room to occupy the Penn Quarter space. Let's hope this one sticks, because besides a chicer vibe, you'll find better, more creative snacks, roasts, and pastas. Take these creamy Sicilian risotto balls, bound with mascarpone and fried until they're as golden as a Twinkie. They look ordinary enough, but take a bite and you're hit with a surprising jolt of lemon. They're an



Arancini have a hint of lemon at Rosselli in Penn Quarter.

excellent accompaniment to the martinis, which, incidentally, are better, too.

Kinoko Nabe

Where: Uchi
1700 M St., NW

One witheringly hot June night, I was jammed into a table at the ever-crowded Japanese hot spot Uchi. The waits between courses were so comically long that, finally, the kitchen sent out this gratis plate of mushrooms as a mea culpa. The soft, tender mushrooms were brightened up with tentsuyu, a light, salty-sweet sauce, then ladled over koshihikari rice and topped with a runny egg yolk. It was not a dish that screamed summer, but it's the one I'd most want to come back for.

Gumbo

Where: Catahoula
79 Potomac Ave., SE

Catahoula, the six-month-old riverfront brasserie in Navy Yard, is a tribute to Cajun and Creole cooking. And as such, chef Thomas Malz is deeply serious about his



Uchi's sleeper hit: salty-sweet mushrooms with a runny egg yolk.

TOP PHOTOGRAPH BY JONNI SCOTT PHOTOGRAPHY; BOTTOM COURTESY OF XIAN FAMOUS FOODS



Brioche-stuffed chicken at Maison Bar à Vins is as artful as it is delicious.

gumbo—and especially the fat-and-flour roux that serves as its foundation. "I was taught to make a proper roux with great ceremony," he says. In the kitchen at New Orleans's Cochon, he observed the process for several weeks before he was allowed to attempt it himself. The dedication paid off—I haven't found a better gumbo in the city. The rich, dark stew, fortified with andouille sausage and tasso ham, has a lingering, not overpowering, spice. It's tempered with long-grain rice and a spoonful of potato aïoli. How do Malz's up-north cooks get the roux just right? Color-matching. They each carry an old penny in their chef coats to remind them of the perfect shade.

Fugazzeta

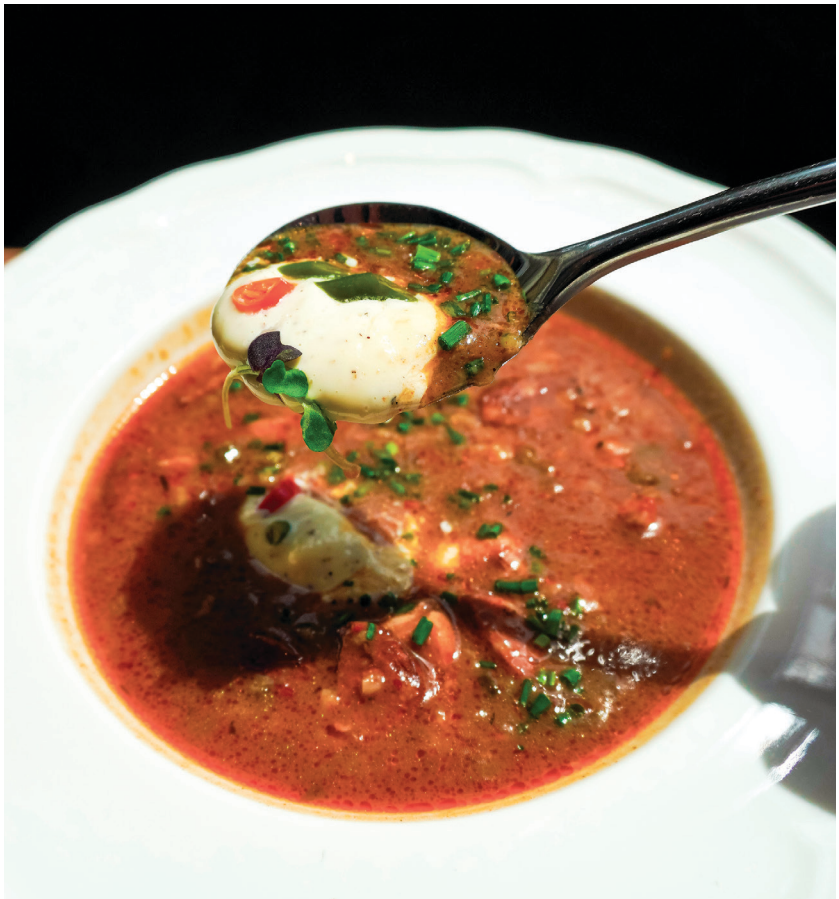
Where: No Regrets Pizza Co.
5454 Nicholson Ln., North Bethesda

There's something wonderfully simple about white pizza. Which also means that in the wrong hands, it can be extremely boring. This pizza shop specializes in three styles of pie: Roman, New York, and "deck-oven artisanal," each of which starts with three-day-fermented dough. Its fugazzeta, though, nods to Argentina. The puffy, sauceless squares are generously laden with mozzarella, Asiago, onions, and chili oil, yet never get soggy. "What started as a special," says co-owner Nick Framarini, "earned a permanent spot on our menu almost immediately."

Brioche-Stuffed Chicken

Where: Maison Bar à Vins
1834 Columbia Rd., NW

This Deco-cool Adams Morgan brownstone spot from Lutèce chef Matt Conroy billed itself as a wine bar when it opened last winter. The kind of place you'd wander into for, say, a late-night Chenin Blanc. But I prefer it for late-night French small plates. (The kitchen stays open until 1 AM on weekends.) Chef de cuisine Jason Chavenson's offerings change constantly, but one fixture is a dish that tastes both nostalgic and aspirational: carved slices of perfectly roasted



Gumbo at Catahoula is topped with potato aïoli.

TOP PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF GIOVANNA BENETTE; BOTTOM COURTESY OF SALTBRIDGE STRATEGIES

Amish chicken breast ringed with crispy copper skin. Inside each slice is an herby brioche stuffing, and a jus made from the rest of the bird is pooled on the plate. "The one nonnegotiable for including a chicken dish on the menu was that it needed to be incredible," Conroy says. Mission accomplished.

Buttermilk Biscuit

Where: Buford's Biscuits
7 W. Market St., Leesburg

Buford's Biscuits, the folksy Leesburg breakfast/lunch spot, serves up precariously towering fried-chicken sandwiches. But I prefer the cathead biscuits—the name alludes to their size—solo. There's no trickery here: The secret to the traditional biscuits is not over- or under-mixing them, says co-owner Charles Schech. Still, only a few Buford's cooks are allowed to make them. The best accent is one of two "flights": either a trio of jams made from fruit gathered at the Leesburg farmers market or three butters sweetened with honey, maple, or cinnamon.

Spicy and Sour Lamb Dumplings

Where: Xian Famous Foods
2800 Clarendon Blvd., Arlington

In 2007, Anthony Bourdain visited—then showcased on *No Reservations*—a basement hand-ripped-noodle stall in Flushing, New York. Since then, the family-run business has blossomed into more than a dozen NYC locations, plus a delivery business and restaurant in Clarendon. (A Rockville ghost kitchen is on the way.) The fat, chewy Shaanxi-style noodles deserve their hype, but don't sleep on these dumplings, which are boiled and overstuffed with ground lamb. You can get them drenched in a vinegary sauce, but the chili-red, cilantro-flecked broth is even better.

Passionfruit Doughnut

Where: Rose Ave Bakery
2633 Connecticut Ave., NW

The top-selling confection at this Woodley Park bakery is a fat, round doughnut piped with thick passionfruit curd. The doughnut itself is so pillowy and crunchy with granulated sugar that it would be excellent on its own. But it plays beautifully with the lush curd, which chef/owner Rose Nguyen perfected when she started her pandemic-born business. ("I felt like we could put it on anything," she says.) Fancy doughnuts don't always land, but this one does.



Get flights of flavored butters and jams to go with a Buford's biscuit.

Walnut Shrimp

Where: Astoria
1521 17th St., NW

There are more interesting things than walnut shrimp on the menu at this beloved Dupont cocktail destination/Sichuan restaurant. It almost reads like kid food. But in between bites of fiery mapo tofu and cumin lamb and dan-dan noodles, a plate of fat, beautifully fried shrimp with creamy honey and candied walnuts is about as comforting as it gets.



Rose Ave's passionfruit doughnut is a bestseller.

TOP PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF BUFORD'S BISCUITS; BOTTOM BY FLAVY CALUMBA

Morning Glory

A Turkish breakfast worth traveling for

By Ike Allen



A lavish morning feast of dips, egg dishes, housemade jams, and more at My Cravingz

MANY OF THE MOST ARDENT FANS OF My Cravingz live nowhere near Manassas. But they find ways to get there. Some plan road trips around it. At least one Turkish family bought a house because it was close to the restaurant.

"To me, there's two types of businesses," says Serhat Yildizci, who runs the place with his family. "One, you want to be in front of as many people as possible on a busy street. Two, you're a destination business—people want to come to you. We've been that kind of business."

Breakfast will help you understand why. Bring at least three people—preferably more. The servers in the palatial marble-and-gold dining room are accustomed to parties of a dozen-plus wandering in on weekends.

It's essential that you order the breakfast spread known as Our Serpme. First, a server will bring out glasses of reddish tea. Soon, a basket of house-baked rolls and simit—bagel-like rings of chewy sesame-studded bread—arrives. Then comes the showstopper: a huge platter lined with tiny bowls of three-berry, apricot, and fig jams; house-churned butter with honey; roasted-red-pepper, spinach, and tomato-walnut dips; olives, walnuts, almonds, dried apricots, cucumbers, cherry tomatoes, and grapes; and three or four varieties of white cheese and cold cuts. Jams and spreads are made with very few ingredients and taste vividly of the fruits and vegetables they're made with.

That cold platter makes you almost forget that your order also includes zucchini fritters, cigar-shaped börek, and a choice of two sizzling egg dishes— sucuklu yumurta (fried eggs layered with slices of sausage) and menemen (a tomatoey scramble) are good options.

The goofy name My Cravingz is apt. It's a restaurant that was essentially willed into existence by the collective appetite of Northern Virginia's Turkish community.

Serhat's mother, Leyla Yildizci, was a stay-at-home mom in Leesburg when she decided to do a favor for a family friend: She would bake simit and börek to help stock the shelves of his new grocery store. Soon, those orders turned into a home business. In 2017, the Yildizcis took over a wholesale bakery space.

One morning, a customer of the store knocked on the bakery's front door. He'd found their address and wanted the freshest possible pastries. Serhat's dad, Salih, told him it wasn't a place for customers—tables were dusted with flour and the desk covered in paperwork.

The man wasn't having it. The next day, he came back and Salih gave him some free pastries and tea. A day later, the man returned with his wife, paid for his meal, and the couple posted pictures of their breakfast. After a week, another Turkish family called asking to bring in a party of 14 friends and family members.

And so the Yildizcis bought cheap furniture from Ikea, and Leyla prepared a full serpme spread as she would for a guest in her home. Word traveled fast, and in 2018 the family signed a lease on the restaurant space they now occupy.

This year, a renovation has turned the dining room a little glitzier and grander. But you don't get the impression that the Yildizcis' most loyal customers care much one way or the other. They were the ones who sat around on Ikea tables in an industrial bakery just to get their Turkish breakfast.

My Cravingz, 7831 Sudley Rd., Manassas

PHOTOGRAPH BY VINA SANANIKONE

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Meet Microangelo



To Hasan Kale, a grain of rice is a canvas

By Nevin Martell

TO SEE HASAN KALE'S ART, YOU NEED to look closely. Very, very closely. The 67-year-old Turkish artist, who lives in Alexandria, paints intensely detailed miniature masterworks onto unconventional culinary canvases. A scene from *Pulp Fiction* on a piece of popcorn. A pumpkin seed painted with Edvard Munch's "The Scream." A portrait of Turkey's founder, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, on a grain of rice.

Over three decades, the artist dubbed "Microangelo" has created more than 400 tiny oil and acrylic paintings without ever using a magnifying glass or other specialized equipment. "However, you must discipline your hands so they don't shake," says Kale, who spends from three days to three months producing a piece. (You can check out examples on his Instagram, @hasankale_microangelo, or buy one on Etsy.)

Given their small size and often edible canvases, there have been some unfortunate incidents. At one exhibit, a guest unknowingly ate a pair of portraits—one on a pistachio, the other on a piece of chocolate—thinking they were hors d'oeuvres. Weeks of work gone in a couple of bites.

Kale taught himself the art form while living in Istanbul, his longtime home. He moved to the States in 2021 after working on a documentary exploring his homeland's unique coffee culture. In 2022, he helped one of the film's collaborators, Gizem White, open the Turkish Coffee Lady cafe in Old Town. He serves as its creative director, painting the murals on the walls and overseeing the menu of classic Turkish fare, such as simit (sesame-studded Turkish bagel) sandwiches, dainty manti dumplings, and bull's-eye-shaped phyllo pies stuffed with feta and spinach.

The multi-hyphenate talent has one more surprising skill: fortuneteller. Rather than reading a palm or tarot cards, Kale divines the future from shapes and patterns left by the Turkish coffee grounds smudging the bottom of a cup. It's his turn to look very, very closely.

1. Woman on a peanut. **2.** Istanbul on a butterfly. **3.** *The Godfather* on popcorn. **4.** Istanbul on a watermelon seed. **5.** A tiny hamburger on paper. **6.** Istanbul on a noodle. **7.** Landmarks painted in coffee. **8.** Flowers on farfalle. **9.** Istanbul on a cherry pit. **10.** Marilyn Monroe on a matchstick. **11.** Johnny Depp on rice.





PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF HASAN KALE


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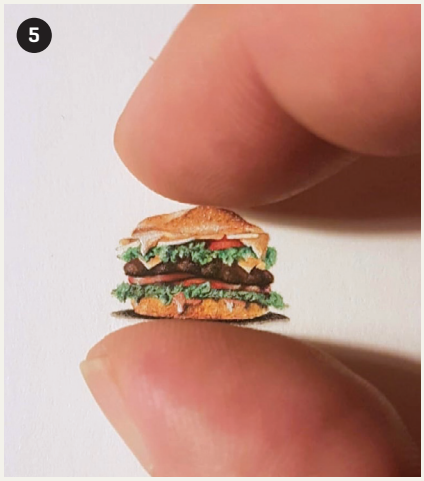
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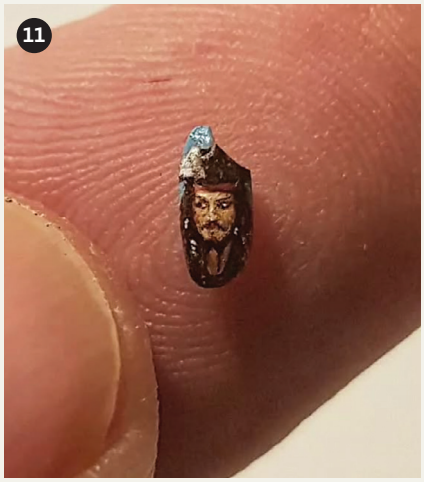
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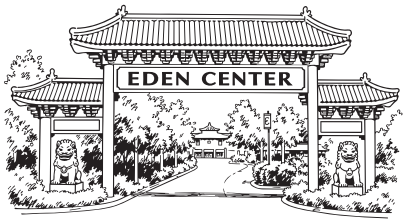


Feast of Eden

Three new spots to check out at Falls Church's Vietnamese hub

By Jessica Sidman

EDEN CENTER, THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA SHOPPING CENTER FOR ALL THINGS Vietnamese, often feels fixed in time. Many of the eateries have been there for decades, serving the same traditional dishes. And while that's not a bad thing, a new generation of restaurateurs is bringing fresh energy to the dining hub.



TamTam Brunch & Dinner

Amid the casual restaurants and grab-and-go shops, couple Thao Tran and Tin Truong wanted to offer a more upscale destination for sit-down coffees and date nights. Their menu includes familiar staples such as garden rolls and chicken pho, but also a citrusy salmon crudo with pickled green mango; abalone soup; and green-chili chicken hot pot. And don't miss the icy flan for dessert. "[People] never think that they can look nice to go to Eden Center. So that's what we want," Tran says. Stop by the adjoining market, Viet Gourmet, for specialty ingredients imported from Vietnam or made in-house, such as dried dragonfruit blooms and shrimp paste with lemongrass. *6767 Wilson Blvd.*



Pop-Up District

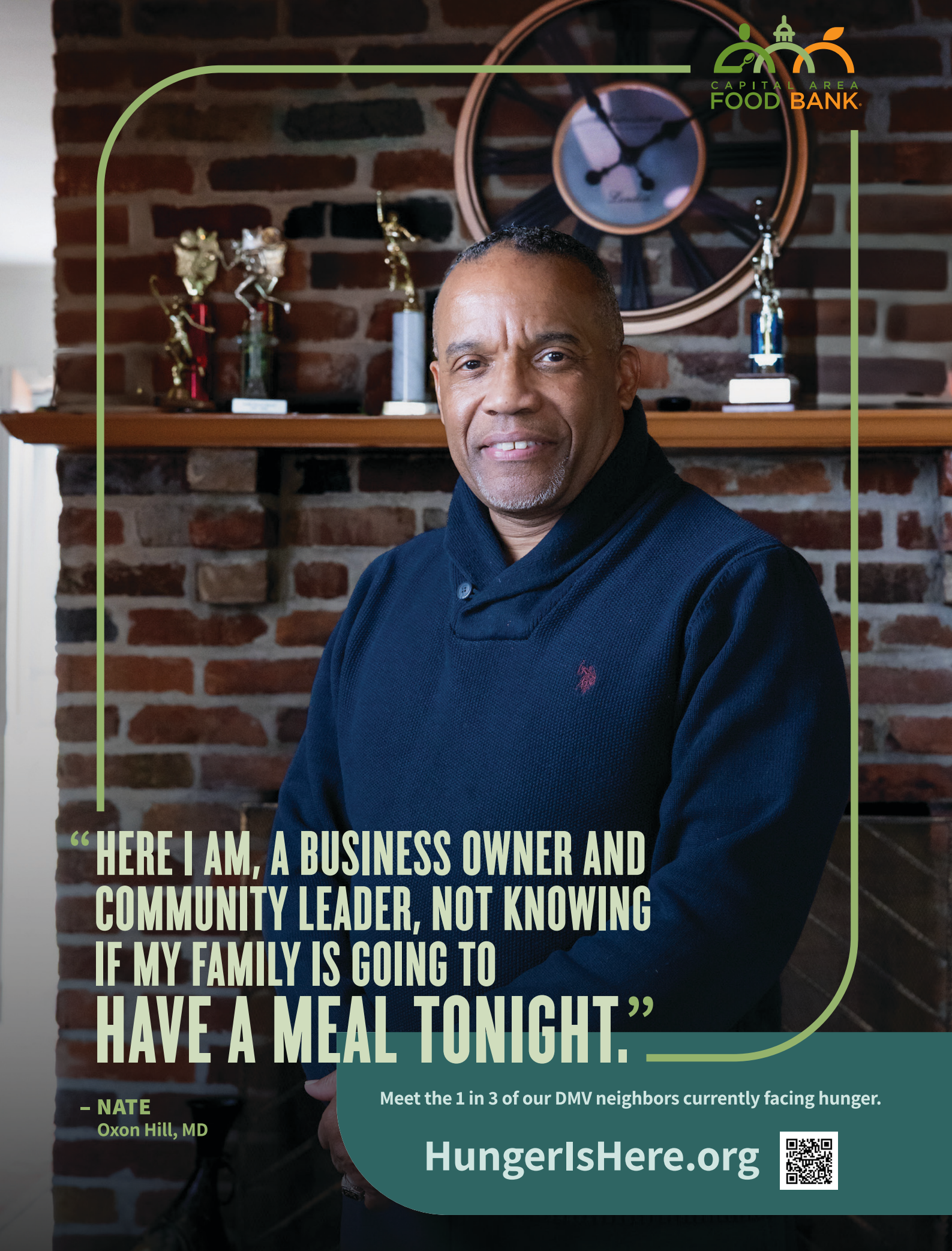
This Asian food hall has a futuristic look, with metallic communal tables, massive screens, and pulsing neon lights. Stalls include a fast-casual spinoff of the Korean barbecue chain Honey Pig, which offers "cupbop"—grilled meats in customizable cups with rice, noodle, and salad bases. Eatsy serves Thai street foods like crispy coconut-rice salad and khao soi (chicken noodle curry). And Sun-C dishes up Vietnamese noodle bowls and steamed tapioca dumplings. Other vendors supply Vietnamese coffee and matcha drinks as well as egg tarts and croissants, while a central bar serves cocktails, soju, and izakaya snacks. Beyond food, Pop-Up District is adding nightlife to Eden Center with weekend DJs and other live performances and events. *6763 Wilson Blvd.*



Bánh Mì Oi

There's often a line at this bánh mì cafe, which started in Boston before arriving in Falls Church in 2025. Like the best bánh mì shops, it bakes its own baguettes: light and airy inside with a delicate, crackly crust. It offers classic Vietnamese cold-cut sandwiches, with Viet pork bologna, ham, steamed pork belly, and pâté layered with housemade aïoli, pickled veggies, jalapeño, and cilantro. But the place also goes beyond tradition with a must-try Nashville hot chicken bánh mì, double-fried and tossed in a fiery, spiced wet rub. Grab a sesame Vietnamese coffee or mango-dragonfruit refresher to go with it. *6795 Wilson Blvd.* W

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF RESTAURANTS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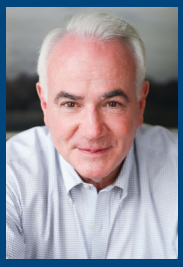

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HOME



IN THE KITCHEN
Banquettes and warm colors—as in this kitchen by Four Brothers Design + Build—are both on-trend. Turn the page for more inspiration.

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE HERSHBERGER

What's Cooking

The latest trends in kitchen design

By Amy Moeller

KITCHEN DESIGN HAS HAD DISTINCTIVE eras: from brightly colored in the '70s to country-style–complete with black-and-white floors–in the '90s to stark and all-white in more recent years. Now, though, kitchens are mixing old, familiar design in new ways or with fresh elements. Here's what local designers say that looks like.

Color and Warmth

"There's much more comfort now with richer, moodier colors like deep greens, earthy blues, even burgundies and rust," says Annie Luttrell of Four Brothers Design + Build. She's particularly excited about the embrace of tinted stains. "Think a rich blue hue where the wood grain still shows. It's a beautiful way to add texture and depth."

On the edgier end of the bold look, Wayne Adams of BarnesVanze Architects says his team has seen growing interest in a "very functional, very moody" style he describes as "steampunk": dark-burgundy lacquer cabinets, equestrian-inspired straps and other metal accents, black or Calacatta Viola marble with pink or burgundy veining, all paired with moody lighting.

While two-tone painted kitchens have probably seen their heyday, Luttrell says contrasting and multicolor palettes are very much in, using a combination of natural or stained wood and painted cabinetry. "Instead of having a colorful island with neutral perimeter cabinets, you might see two different painted-cabinet colors paired with



Designer Katie Bromley's own kitchen features a colorful backsplash, warm neutral cabinetry, and open shelves.

PHOTOGRAPH BY IAN MICHELSON

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a stained-wood hutch or another freestanding piece," says Luttrell. "There's a real desire for kitchens to feel more like furnished rooms and less like a collection of perfectly matching cabinets." The style is in keeping with the "Nancy Meyers aesthetic"–kitchens that feel cozy, timeless, and full of character. Elements such as plate racks; vintage decor; artwork; open shelves and glass-fronted cabinets; and furniture-style islands are part of the vibe–baker's tables, in particular, are something Johanna Howe of Howe Interiors expects to see more of in 2027: "They are charming, classic, and the open legs give a room a more open feel."

Warm woods like walnut are gaining popularity. And for those who want a neutral kitchen, warm hues such as taupe and mushroom are winning out over white, says Luttrell.

The desire for more warmth includes

Artwork–such as in this kitchen by Jordan Design Build Group–can add a cozy, personal touch.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JENN VERRIER



lighting. “Pendants, sconces, countertop lamps, in addition to task- and under-cabinet lighting–absolutely nothing makes a room feel more inviting than layered lighting,” says Katie Bromley of Spaces by Katie. “If you have to be in there cooking, you might as well feel calm and look great.”

Heart of the Home

People want kitchens to feel like an extension of their living space, Luttrell says–whether in an open floor plan or a more defined space (which is seeing a resurgence). One way to encourage loved ones to sit a little longer: comfortable seating. “One of the most requested features we’re seeing is a banquette,” she notes. “It creates a place to not just eat but gather, work, do homework, and linger.” Plus, Luttrell adds, it softens a room otherwise dominated by hard surfaces.

But for a banquette to have the intended effect, you have to get it right, says Bromley: “Nobody wants to sit at a banquette that’s too far or too close to the table, or one that’s too low or too high. Considering the foam and table height is crucial.”

Kitchen TVs are making a comeback–Bromley will sometimes recommend adding one. “For sports-loving families like ours, we frequently host get-togethers, and naturally, guests collect in the kitchen,” she says. “We have a small Frame TV so guests can keep watch while grabbing food or sitting at the kitchen bar.”

Other details that can make a kitchen look more like a space to gather and less like one designed solely for food prep, says Bromley, include curved cabinetry; wall coverings and window treatments; and textures such as wood, rattan, mesh, and metal: “There are so many ways to make the kitchen a functional space that’s inviting and truly cohesive with the rest of a well-designed and cozy home.”



In this kitchenette, Katie Bromley used wallpaper and color to infuse personality.

PHOTOGRAPH BY IAN MICHELSON





A scullery and a furniture-style island are features of this kitchen by BarnesVanze Architects.

Function Over Form

Adams says that regardless of aesthetic trends, the design process now begins with a broader question: How are you going to use this kitchen? Designing for someone who likes to cook, he explains, often includes exposed shelves for displaying oils and spices, a hanging display of pots and pans (a bygone detail that's returning), and a layout designed to keep everything in reach. For families with school-age kids, it might mean a great space for breakfast and an island for homework.

In especially large kitchens, Adams says homeowners are likely now to include an auxiliary space to support the kitchen, such as a scullery—where they may put several dishwashers and a sink for doing everything from post-meal cleanup to cutting flowers from the garden—or a butler's pantry, which might have a sink or wet bar as well as storage space for silver, china, and more.

Bromley says appliance garages are being rethought: "The notion that every single appliance should be hidden is not practical." With small appliances becoming more stylish, there's no need to shy away from displaying, say, a beautiful espresso machine. "For the oft-used air fryer, choose something in stainless steel and create a cutout so it's tucked aside but not closed off."

Pro Tips

Five chefs share the appliances, design details, and other features they have or would love in a dream kitchen

By Claudia Rosenbaum



A Rational iCombi Pro 6-Pan Oven

"It's a smart oven that can do a combination of convection and steam heat. It's so convenient. I don't throw a lot of dinner parties, but it would be a very nice piece of machinery to have if I did."

—Anthony Jones, Marcus DC



A Good Range Hood

"The hood in my kitchen [a GE 30-inch Smart Designer Custom Insert] is very powerful and immediately sucks all the smoke out of the room, which allows me to cook at the very high heat you need to get effective caramelization."

—Amy Brandwein, Centrolina and Piccolina

TOP PHOTOGRAPH BY DANA DAMEWOOD PHOTOGRAPHY; JONES BY JOSHUA FOO; BRANDWEIN BY SCOTT SUCHMAN

Finishing Touches

As with anything in design, the differences are in the details.

Handcrafted details like bobbin molding on cabinets and painted wood floors; chair cushions with scalloped edges; and "living finishes"—natural materials that change over time, such as copper, unlacquered brass, and uncoated nickel—are among the things Howe expects to see more of. "The patina these materials develop is the charm," she says.

For backsplashes, Bromley hopes people will embrace options softer than stone—drywall, wallpaper, V-groove paneling, or beadboard painted to match the walls, for instance.

And when it comes to islands, Adams says waterfall sides and simple edges are giving way to more intricate elements like fluted or drill-hole edges. Curved "double ogee" edges are another good option, says Bromley.

Ultimately, she concludes, it's about to personality: "I don't want to walk into your kitchen and see a room that could be anywhere or for anyone. I want to see reflections of the people who use it and the home that it's within. Connect the style of the kitchen to all of the other things you love in your home, whether that be the use of color, pattern, antiques, art, textures. There is a role for all of it in a kitchen."



A bold design by Four Brothers includes dark-green cabinetry, layered lighting, and exposed brick.



A Second Refrigerator

"A couple of years ago, I renovated and installed a beautiful, large, full-height Miele refrigerator. But looking back, adding a matching one beside it would have been perfect. You can never have enough refrigerator space."

—David Deshaies, L'Ardente and Unconventional Diner



A Mill Food Recycler

"It dries and grinds food scraps into grounds that I can sprinkle in my garden. Food scraps contribute to our landfill—I wish tools like these were readily available to support human and planetary health."

—Johanna Hellrigl, Ama



A Gas Stove

"I currently have an electric one at home, but gas has a constant flame that really does make a difference, especially when I'm cooking Nepalese-style food, frying, or making roti flatbread."

—Suresh Sundas, Tapori

TOP PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE HERSHBERGER; DESHAIES BY MIKE FUENTES PHOTOGRAPHY; HELLRIGL BY BIRCH THOMAS; SUNDAS BY STARCHEF



Bethesda Lane is a pedestrian walkway in the bustling Bethesda Row area.

The Briefing

Bethesda

Favorite places—new and old—to eat, drink, and shop. Plus, a suggested itinerary for enjoying a day there.

By Sydney Carroll and Walker Whalen

BETHESDA'S CLAIM TO FAME IN THE mid-18th century was its first commercial establishment: a small stone tavern near the intersection of what's now Wisconsin Avenue and Old Georgetown Road, where travelers could rest and fuel up for the journey to and from DC. By the early 19th century, Montgomery County's first turnpike brought more development to the area, and at the end of the century, the construction of a trolley line cemented Bethesda as a place of commerce and industrial growth. Today—now connected to DC by Metro—the area has grown into a vibrant center for arts, dining, and community. The blend of residential and commercial offers residents the best of both urban and suburban worlds. Here are some favorite spots.

THINGS TO DO

Round of Applause

Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, **Round House Theatre** *(4545 East-West Hwy.)* has earned more than 250 Helen Hayes Award nominations—it's won 60—and serves 5,000-plus students each year with educational programs. This season's lineup of plays includes *Cult of Love, Chinese Republicans, Baby Shower Katie,* and *The White Chip.*

Kids Rock

Designed for ages 4 to 14, the **Kid Museum** *(3 Bethesda Metro Center)* is a creative space where children can engage in hands-on activities—such as learning to code, making crafts in a wood shop, and creating textiles. It's open to the public on Sundays from 10 to 4 and also has afterschool classes, camps, class visits, and other events throughout the week.

Go Green

A five-acre property that William and Virginia McCrillis donated to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission in 1978, **McCrillis Gardens** *(6910 Greentree Rd.)* has walking paths; gazebos and benches for sitting; and beautiful flowers. Located in a quiet neighborhood, the park is open daily from 10 to sunset.

Local Art

The intimate **Waverly Street Gallery** *(4600 East-West Hwy.)* features work by local and international artists, from paintings to prints to jewelry. Upcoming exhibitions feature works celebrating the Potomac River and the exploration of color in art. Other events include workshops and artist talks.

WHERE TO EAT

Popping Up Again

The "not famous but known" Northeast chain **PopUp Bagels** continued its DC-area takeover in August when it opened a Bethesda location *(7607 Old Georgetown Rd.)* after launching a much-anticipated Georgetown shop in April. You won't find

PHOTOGRAPH BY EVY MAGES

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WHAT'S SELLING



From concierge-staffed condos and luxury townhouses to classic Colonials and a midcentury-modern on a large lot, here's what's sold in Bethesda in the past few months.

$180,000

A 1,000-square-foot one-bedroom, one-bathroom condo at the Kenwood with gas appliances and parquet floors, plus assigned parking and a community fitness center and pool.

$399,000

A one-bedroom, one-bathroom, 11th-floor unit in the Christopher, an amenity-rich condo building with garage parking and two private outdoor spaces.

$1,225,000

A four-bedroom, three-bathroom Colonial on a quarter acre with oak floors, a sunroom, multiple fireplaces, and a dining room with cathedral ceilings.

$1,300,000

A three-bedroom, three-bathroom townhouse in Grosvenor Heights with four levels, a private elevator, floor-to-ceiling windows, and a rooftop terrace.

$2,200,000

A 4,150-square-foot midcentury-modern gem with four bedrooms and four baths on 1.28 wooded acres.

$6,250,000

A seven-bedroom, nine-and-a-half-bathroom house with two driveways, 11-foot ceilings, and a high-end kitchen on nearly three-quarters of an acre.



Bagels and schmears are designed to "rip and dip" at PopUp Bagels.

bagel sandwiches here: Instead, the viral spot encourages the "rip and dip" method, in which you tear off a bagel piece and dip it into one of the signature schmears, such as scallion cream cheese or brown-sugar cinnamon butter.

Home Style

The **Food Market,** a full-service restaurant from chef Chad Gauss—with other locations in Columbia and Baltimore, its flagship—recently expanded to Bethesda *(4720 Hampden Ln.)*. It offers a mix of cuisines and "comfort foods"—from Amish soft pretzels to birria empanadas and falafel-flavored hummus—plus an extensive cocktail menu with spritzes, martinis, and nonalcoholic offerings.

Soft-Serve and Sashimi

After serving up sushi at beloved local haunts including Sushi Nakazawa, Raku, and the late Woodmont Grill, chef Raymond Yu brings sashimi, nigiri, and maki rolls, as well as three different omakase tasting experiences, to **Sushi Masato** *(4914 Hampden Ln.)*. Yu and his wife, Amy, also plan to open a Japanese-inspired dessert shop next door called **The One Cake,** which will offer desserts and soft-serve ice cream.

Old Friend

Mon Ami Gabi *(7239 Woodmont Ave.)*, in business more than two decades, is looking très chic after an extensive renovation. The updated space features a new bar, furnishings, and menu items—though diners can still expect French bistro classics such as steak frites, onion soup, escargots, and caviar.

Food Fusion

After manning a food truck in Kensington, then working at Thai Supperclub and Bar Chinois, chefs Lekki Limvatana

Fun Fact

A number of Hollywood actors have Bethesda ties. Among them: Daniel Stern *(Home Alone)* and Richard Schiff *(The West Wing)*, both from the Maryland burb, and Julia Louis-Dreyfus, who graduated from Holton-Arms School. Another notable former resident: ultra-decorated Olympic swimmer Katie Ledecky.

PHOTOGRAPH ON LEFT BY BTW IMAGES; RIGHT COURTESY OF M18 PUBLIC RELATIONS

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"Spicy Salads" get their own section on the menu at Sense of Thai.

and Satang Ruangsangwatana opened a boutique eatery in April inspired by Bangkok's late-night food culture. **Six Ways to Sunday** *(8003 Norfolk Ave.)* has a Sino-Siamese menu with small plates of fusion dishes like quail-egg wontons, salmon crudo, and shrimp kari rice. Cocktails include the Clara Bow (Maker's Mark, St-Germain, grenadine, and lemon) and the Truth & Envy (gin, Aperol, lemon juice, grapefruit, and hibiscus).

Third Sense

After debuting locations in Chantilly and Ashburn, chef Porntipa Pattanamekar brought **Sense of Thai** *(5314 Zenith Overlook)* to the Westbard Square neighborhood in June. Combining hospitality with authentic Southern Thai flavors, the new spot offers classics such as spring rolls, chicken satay, and pad Thai, plus new takes on traditional dishes, including a Wagyu-beef larb, hat-yai chicken wings, and Thai-tea crème brûlée.

Ceviche Central

Pisco y Nazca brought its modern twist on Peruvian cuisine to Bethesda *(7401 Woodmont Ave.)* in 2025 after previous success in Dupont Circle, Reston, and Florida. The menu includes eight ceviches, Peruvian staples such as lomo saltado, and fusion dishes like pork-belly bao and empanadas.

To Gather

Chef Ismet Sahin leads diners through tastes of Turkey, Greece, and Lebanon at **Agora** *(1 Bethesda Metro Center)*, which opened in July. Brunch, lunch, and dinner menus–including a $45 bottomless brunch ($55 if you add bottomless drinks)–feature spreads like hummus and labneh, kebabs, seafood selections, and dessert offerings including baklava and pistachio soufflé.

Falafel Friends

Dalia's Falafel began as a pop-up operated by longtime friends Ben Assaraf, Kevin Gill, and Cody Chatham. In 2023, they opened their brick-and-mortar store *(7750 Old Georgetown Rd.)* serving bowls, pita, and kebabs with a commitment to sustainable and clean eating.

Fun Fact

People in Bethesda often say it has one of the highest per capita concentrations of restaurants in the country. Though we couldn't track down official numbers, we crunched data we could find. While the restaurant-to-residents ratio won't earn it a top national ranking, it's still impressive.

San Francisco
1 restaurant for every 207 residents

DC
1:261

Bethesda
1:340

Chicago
1:372

Arlington
1:382

SHOPPING

Top Collar

The Maryland-based menswear brand **Collars & Co.** *(7126 Bethesda Ln.)*–of *Shark Tank* fame–is best known for its signature hard-collared golf shirt, designed to blend the comfort of a knit polo with the polish of a dress shirt. Its fans include entrepreneurs Mark Cuban and Peter Jones.

Yogi-Inspired

The LA athleisure brand **Alo,** whose name stands for "air, land, ocean," exudes coastal vibes and a wellness ethos–and recently made Bella Hadid the face of its new campaign. Now its wide range of lounge and sporting wear is on Bethesda Row *(7236 Woodmont Ave.)*.

Good Sports

After starting as a golf and men's sporting-apparel brand, **Johnnie-O** *(7243 Woodmont Ave.)*–which calls itself a blend of "East Coast tradition and West Coast casual"–now has options for the whole family, including athleisure, comfortable quarter-zips, and game-day-themed attire.

Heart of Gold

A jewelry brand known for its delicate gold chains and charms designed for everyday, **Gorjana** has a new location at Westfield Montgomery mall *(7101 Democracy Blvd.)*. Simple and stackable designs are made to mix and match, and a portion of sales is donated to organizations that support women and children.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SENSE OF THAI

DC PURPLE SKIES: LET'S TURN DC PURPLE!

This October, DC skies are turning purple. Swap out your porch light to purple bulbs to show your support for Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Anyone can participate from local organizations to businesses and families. Learn more at **SpreadLoveDC.org**.

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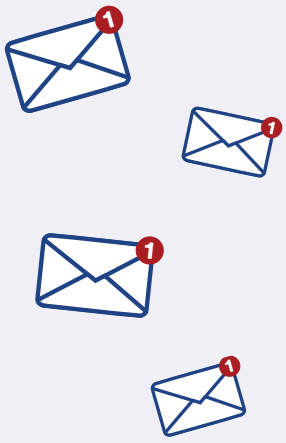

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SUNDAY *in* BETHESDA

Bethesda native and real-estate agent **Lauren Davis** walks us through her idea of the perfect day in her neighborhood



8 AM

Iced Lattes at Quartermaine on Bethesda Row

"We are early risers in our house – awake by 6 AM," says Davis. "We enjoy a coffee at home and then walk our beloved Lab, Gus, to Bethesda for our second coffee of the morning at Quartermaine. Iced lattes for us and a bowl of water for Gus. Then we stroll Bethesda Lane to window-shop."

9:30 AM

Hot Yoga at SoulFire Collective on Cordell Avenue

"If I'm lucky, I'll be greeted by my daughter, Georgia, who works at the front desk," says Davis. Then it's off to the hot room for "60 minutes of moving, sweating, flowing, and reflecting."



11 AM

Bethesda Central Farm Market

After yoga, it's time for the family's weekly haul at the farmers market, which happens to be located at Davis's alma mater – Bethesda Elementary. "The mission for my husband is always Honeycrisp apples from Twin Springs. Once those are secured, we grab fresh vegetables for dinner and berries in season." New to the market? Davis says don't sleep on the food trucks – "especially Rita's Crepes."

12:30 PM

Sandwiches to Go From Cornucopia Specialty Food on Norfolk Avenue

For lunch on the go, Davis will head to this "hidden gem" – which also offers fresh pastries, pasta, and sauces imported from Italy – to grab sandwiches. "My favorite is the caprese. I think it's the delicious balsamic vinegar he uses."

2 PM

A Walk on the Capital Crescent Trail, Then Browsing Around Bethesda Row

On a free day, Davis will convince her daughter to take a long walk followed by some shopping. "My favorite stops are Terrain to admire the orchid arrangements and Jenni Kayne for the Oak Essentials skincare products. Her [favorite stops] are Vuori for more workout sets and Reformation for fancier-occasion items. And we both love Wonderland Books [a few blocks away] – a true local bookstore with a great selection and cute gifts."

6 PM

Dinner at Home, Courtesy of the Organic Butcher

Most Sundays, Davis's family has dinner at home to reset for the week. The butcher shop on Old Georgetown Road, she says, has been a welcome addition to the neighborhood. "We love grabbing fresh tuna for the grill – they carry all the dinner essentials, even wine."

8 PM

A Delicious Dessert

"In our house, we're a bit divided on where we should grab a sweet treat. My husband would choose Jeni's for anything peanut-butter-flavored. My daughter would get Yogitopi frozen yogurt, and I'd opt for a Levain cookie."



TOP PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LAUREN DAVIS; COFFEE BY DEB LINDSEY; APPLES COURTESY OF PEXELS; COOKIES BY KATE PREVITE



The Kellogg Collection offers home decor such as rugs and light fixtures.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF KELLOGG COLLECTION

Suit Up

The boutique **Everett Hall** *(7706 Woodmont Ave.)* offers refined suits designed by a Howard graduate, handcrafted in Italy, and sold in what aims to be an intimate and luxe shopping experience.

Teen Fave

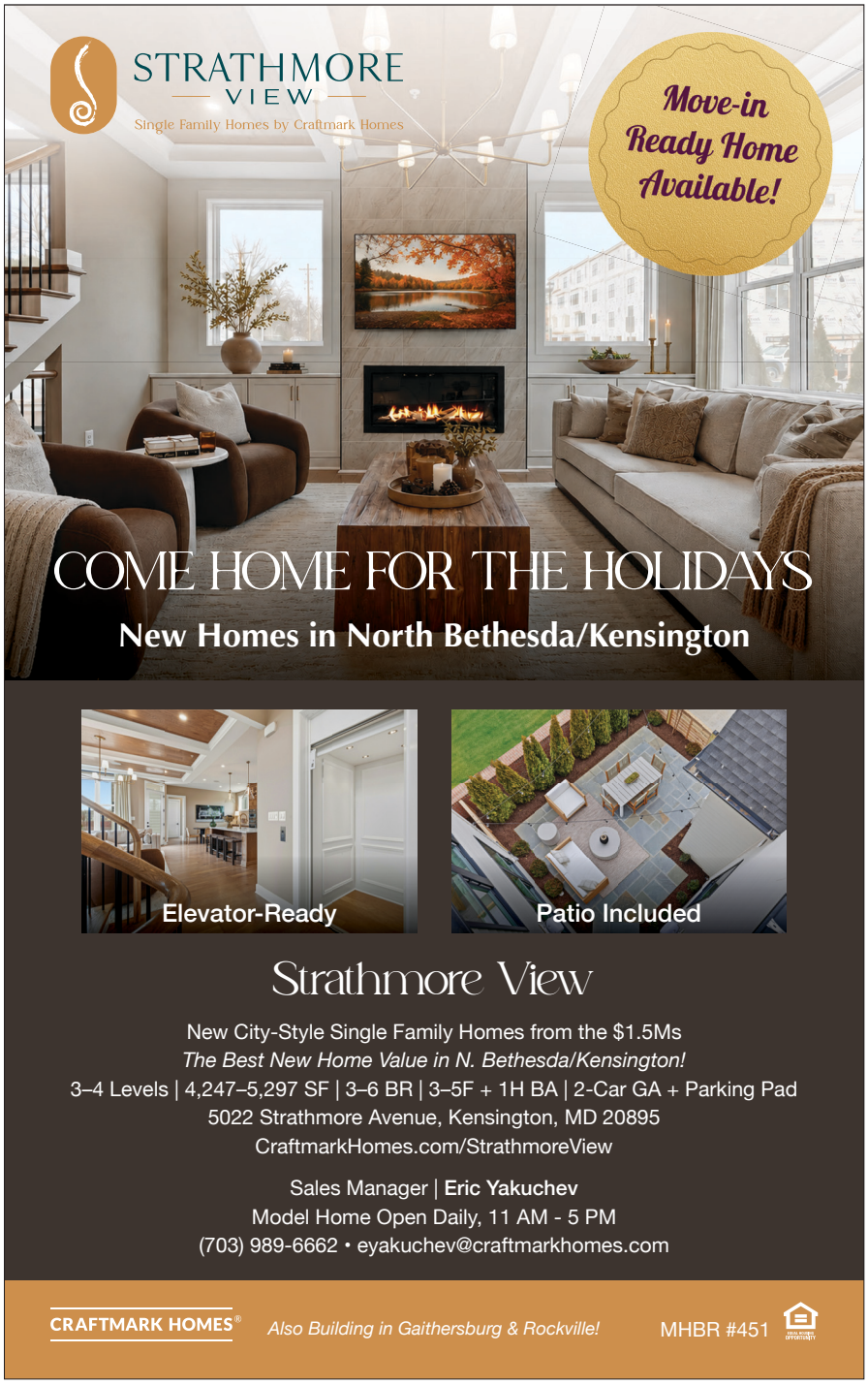
The latest trends and styles–from fragrances to jeans to patterned bedspreads–are on tap at teen favorite **Urban Outfitters,** which recently opened a warehouse-style shop at Westfield Montgomery mall *(7101 Democracy Blvd.)*.

Home Sweet Home

In the Wildwood Shopping Center, DC home-furnishings chain the **Kellogg Collection** *(10207 Old Georgetown Rd.)* boasts a fresh and colorful assortment of rugs, throws, upholstery, and lighting fixtures–alongside oak furniture fit for an English countryside manor. In-house interior designers can work with you to customize your space.

California Dreaming

Rails is an LA lifestyle and clothing brand that recently opened on Bethesda Row *(4852 Bethesda Ave.)*. Its blend of European aesthetic and laid-back West Coast vibe–inspired by the founder's



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CRMA

The Association Media, Scott McDonald, Ph.D. Nomos Research, October 2015



Puzzles, blankets, and knickknacks abound at Green & Bean, a gift shop with a focus on sustainability.

trip on the Eurorail—means chic and comfortable everyday essentials for men and women.

The Write Stuff

While it's best known for its paper products, the luxury stationery brand **Moleskine** *(4808 Bethesda Ave.)* also sells a range of customizable notebooks as well as bags ideal for commuting and work travel.

Fountain of Youth

A store designed with tweens in mind, **Sunset on Midsummer** *(10303 Old Georgetown Rd.)* offers fun, colorful, and trendy tween-girl shopping. Tees, skirts, PJs, and accessories are customizable in the store's Make It Yours section, and trinkets and toys mean it's an excellent destination for gift-shopping.

New Kicks

From "dad shoe" legacy to streetwear fame, **New Balance** has made a huge stylistic comeback in the past five years and now finds itself available to shoppers on Bethesda Row *(7033 Arlington Rd.)*.

Bauble Boutique

Tchotchkes and knickknacks are the name of the game at **Green & Bean** *(4600 East-West Hwy.)*. Perfect for gifting or decorating, the curated home goods and trinkets come from sustainable and ethically sourced brands. Once you find the perfect puzzle, candle, blanket, or body scrub, the in-store wrapping service will use compostable material to box up your treasure. W

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF GREEN & BEAN

Fun Fact

"Down at the Twist and Shout," the 1990 hit by singer-songwriter Mary Chapin Carpenter, was inspired by an American Legion hall in Bethesda that used to host live music on weekends—including the zydeco band Beausoleil, featured in the song.

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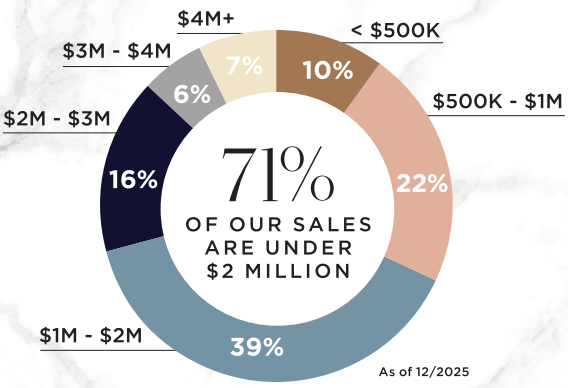

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Off the Market!

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

VIRGINIA

1 **WHERE:** McLean.
BOUGHT BY: Scott Manoogian, president and CEO of ImpactOffice Technologies.
LISTED: $5,750,000.
SOLD: $5,562,500.
DAYS ON MARKET: 74.
BRAGGING POINTS: A new 8,750-square-foot house on a fenced half-acre lot with six bedrooms,



TOP PHOTOGRAPH BY NATHAN STEWART PHOTOGRAPHY; BOTTOM BY CPV PHOTOGRAPHY





six bathrooms, three half baths, two fireplaces, a foyer, a library, a recreation room, an exercise room, and a covered porch.

WHERE: McLean.
BOUGHT BY: **Parker R. Teel,** president and chairman of Teel Construction.
LISTED: **$4,499,999.**
SOLD: **$4,300,000.**
DAYS ON MARKET: 45.
BRAGGING POINTS: A new Colonial-style house with seven bedrooms, six and a half bathrooms, two fireplaces, a wine room, an exercise room, a guest suite, and a three-car garage.

MARYLAND

2 **WHERE:** Bethesda.
SOLD BY: **Dean Seavers,** a private-equity adviser, and **Tara Seavers.**
LISTED: **$9,995,000.**
SOLD: **$9,500,000.**
DAYS ON MARKET: 161.
BRAGGING POINTS: A 13,448-square-foot mansion on two acres with six bedrooms, nine and a half bathrooms, two fireplaces, a foyer, an elevator, an indoor sports court, a pool and hot tub, a fire-pit area, and a tennis court.

WHERE: Potomac.
SOLD BY: **Jamie Kutchman Wynne,** founder and CEO of Marigold & Grey Gifting.
LISTED: **$3,995,000.**
SOLD: **$3,995,000.**
DAYS ON MARKET: 0.
BRAGGING POINTS: An 11,487-square-foot Colonial with eight bedrooms, eight and a half bathrooms, five fireplaces, a foyer, two laundry rooms, a recreation room, a theater, a gym, and an expansive backyard.

DC

3 **WHERE:** Cleveland Park.
BOUGHT BY: **Brooke Bollyky,** a managing director at Boston Consulting Group, and **Thomas Bollyky,** a global-health expert at the Council on Foreign Relations.
LISTED: **$5,149,900.**
SOLD: **$4,800,000.**
DAYS ON MARKET: 22.
BRAGGING POINTS: A 1905 Tudor Revival on a corner lot with seven bedrooms, four and a half bathrooms, four fireplaces, a two-story family room with a skylight, a sunroom, two laundry rooms, and a covered deck.

WHERE: Georgetown.
BOUGHT BY: **Karl Karg,** a partner at Latham & Watkins.
LISTED: **$4,395,000.**
SOLD: **$4,100,000.**
DAYS ON MARKET: 0.
BRAGGING POINTS: A 1900 Federal-style townhouse with four bedrooms, three and a half bathrooms, three fireplaces, an eat-in kitchen, and a dining room with French doors that open onto a pergola-covered terrace and a garden.

4 **WHERE:** Georgetown.
BOUGHT BY: **Ashley Patterson Beaty,** head of global engagement at the critical-minerals development firm Cove Kaz Capital Group.
LISTED: **$4,000,000.**
SOLD: **$3,850,000.**
DAYS ON MARKET: 199.
BRAGGING POINTS: A 3,319-square-foot condo in the Ritz-Carlton with two bedrooms, two bathrooms, two half baths, a sauna in the primary bathroom, and a bar with three large beverage refrigerators. W

Sales information provided by Bright MLS.

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FINE ARTS & FLOWERS AT THE VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

Fine Arts & Flowers is a free exhibition of floral displays inspired by art in VMFA's collection, created by designers from the Garden Club of Virginia, the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs, and Ikebana of Richmond. Events include talks, luncheons, guided tours, floral workshops, a fashion show, and children's activities.

VMFA.MUSEUM/EXHIBITIONS/FAF

EVENTS



▲ 10/23/26

NIGHT OF THE LIVING ZOO

7 p.m. – 11 p.m.

Night of the Living Zoo is back at the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute! Grab your friends and explore the Zoo after dark at this adults-only (21+) Halloween party with open bars, entertainers, live music, and after-hours animal viewing.

NATIONALZOO.SI.EDU/EVENTS

PETS



A "Porch Stylist" on What Fall Means to People and Why a Seasonal Reset Is Important

For Devon Szklennik, a 312-pound pumpkin is all in a day's work



NO PLACE LIKE HOME: Three-year-old Devon at her family's house in Alexandria in 1998, wearing a Dorothy costume her grandmother made.

WHEN DEVON SZKLENNIK BEGAN DECORATING HER HOME FOR THE holidays, she did it to recreate for her kids the seasonal magic her own mother had created for her. But in 2024, when the two decided to launch a styling business, the Posh Porch, she wasn't sure how many people would be as enthusiastic. She soon confirmed she was far from alone. Now in her third year of installing front-step displays overflowing with pumpkins and gourds, Szklennik talks about how she got started and why she thinks this time of year means more than just PSL.

"MY MOM RAISED US IN A home where every holiday was decorated to the nines. Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's Day, Fourth of July. There's something about being little, having a bad day at school, and walking in the door to a house that smells like fall, with pumpkins and candles and garlands. I wanted to give my kids the same thing, so I started decorating my own porch. Neighbors began asking whether I'd do theirs—that's the genesis of the business.

"[The first season,] we had to become experts on warehouse space, every farm and auction within driving distance, pallet jacks and lift gates, recipes for a natural critter deterrent, how long a pumpkin lasts. And how many pumpkins does a porch actually need before it tips from full to cluttered? Our first [official] customers came from driving around looking for what we called "corner-staple homes"—beautiful houses on high-traffic corners. We'd knock and offer to style their porch for free, in exchange for a sign with a QR code out front. Then it was me, my husband, my mom, and my daughter driving around putting door hangers on mailboxes. We'd park, sprint out in four directions, get back in, drive another 15 yards, repeat.

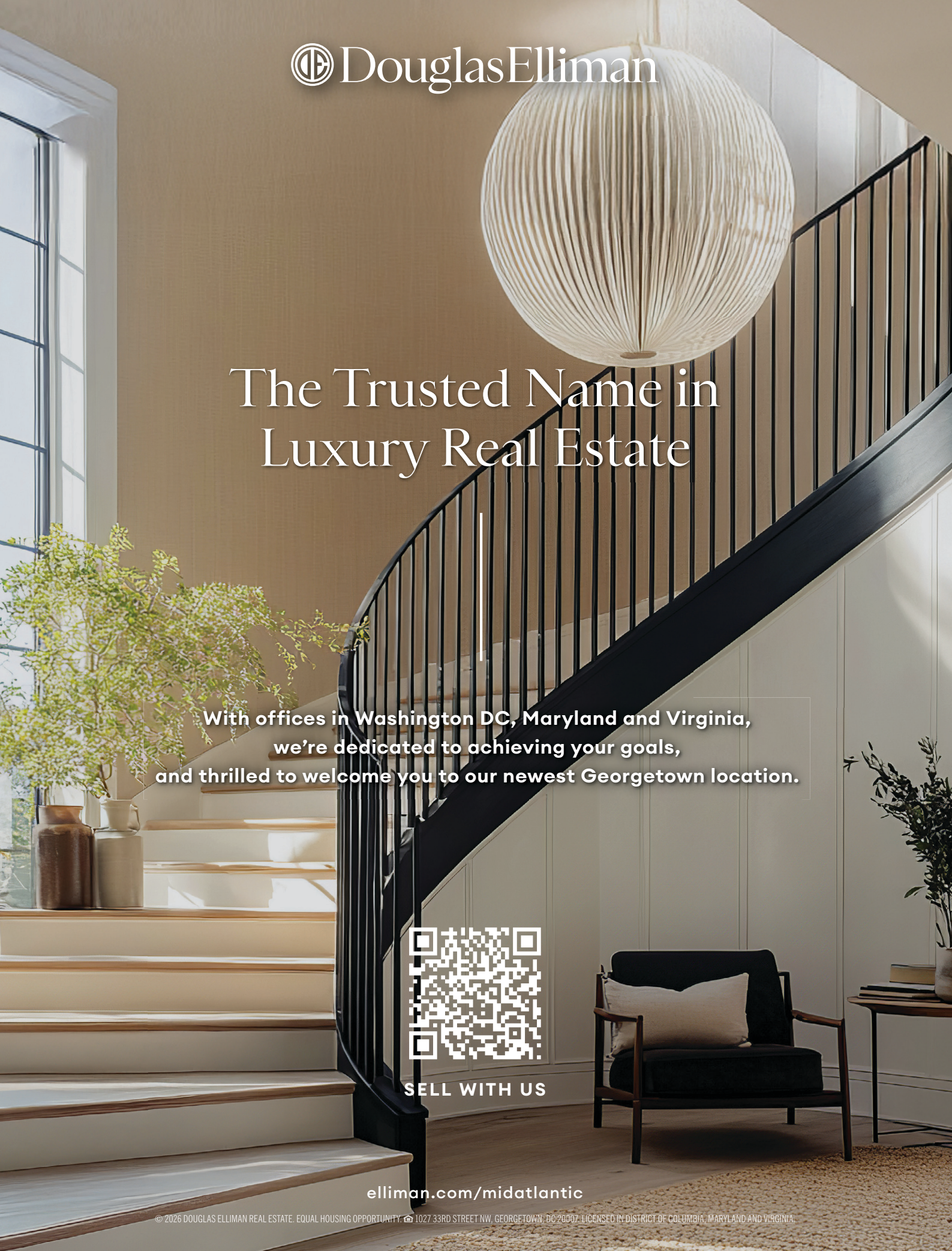
"One large home that holds a Thanksgiving party every year needed the pumpkins looking their freshest on the day of the party, which meant watching the weather to time the install, [which included] the driveway, the front porch, the interior, then the entire back of the house—around the pool and up the columns overlooking the lake: 456 pumpkins. We get occasional requests for grand-prize pumpkins—the heaviest we've worked with was 312 pounds.

"Almost nobody is buying pumpkins—they're buying the feeling. People want to be the house that feels welcoming when a friend pulls up, when the school bus goes by. And fall is the emotional new year: The first cool morning lifts people. It's when families reset—school, sports, the holidays coming.

"At the end of the season, we partner with farms to donate the pumpkins to their animals. It's really endearing to see the animals enjoying a pumpkin feast. It gives the whole thing a second life instead of a dumpster."

—AS TOLD TO AMY MOELLER

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DEVON SZKLENNIK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