

James Beard-nominated Chef
Rahman "Rock" Harper at Queen
Mother's restaurant on Columbia
Pike in Arlington.

The Arlington Connection

Secrets of Rock Harper's Chicken

PAGE 4

Walking Palooza

PAGE 3

Families Need More Food Help

PAGE 8

PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION

SENIOR LIVING, PAGE 2, 7 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 5 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 6

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ONLINE AT WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

AFAC Serves Record Number of Families

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

The tagline for Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) reads “Serving 2,900 hundred families in need every week.” Just recently it had read “Serving 2,700 hundred families every week.” Now their most recent statistics indicate AFAC provided groceries to a historic number of families in a single week serving 3,055 families the week ending March 12, 2023.

AFAC’s Chief Executive Officer Charlie Meng says they were a little surprised but they had been watching the number of families served increase by about 100 families a month since January 2022 when inflation began to hurt their families. But he says they did not run out of anything and will not.

Meng says AFAC has seen a steady increase in the number of families since inflation took over as the dominant reason forcing families into food insecurity. When you couple the rising cost of essentials with the loss of the extra pandemic SNAP benefits, you find families are struggling despite an increase in the minimum wage.

Meng says the double whammy of increase in the number of families served by AFAC plus the impact of inflation is putting a huge strain on their budget. For instance a case of eggs that cost \$16.95 last year was



Stamp Out Hunger Day sponsored by letter carriers on the second Saturday in May donates food to AFAC.

recently \$66.70 a case. “We budgeted \$1.5 million for food purchases in FY2023 which ends June 30. We have already overspent the food line by \$300,000. By the end of the



Arlington Food Assistance truck loaded up for delivery.

fiscal year I expect that to be a \$500,000 overage.”

There are a number of different ways the community can support AFAC which can be seen by the tall cardboard food collection boxes located at schools, libraries, businesses and sometimes yards all across the county. A number of groups sponsor food drives, sometimes with a special theme like Easter baskets or baking supplies for the holidays. The most commonly requested items include canned tuna, beans, rice, cooking oil and non-sugar cereal.

“The goal is 1.5 million pounds of donated food. However, food donations are down since inflation has hit even our generous donors.” In addition to donations Meng says that AFAC purchases food from local and national wholesale food suppliers and this means they can buy three times as much with a dollar as a person could buy at a grocery store.

In addition to a number of special fundraisers like the annual golf tournament and the spring gala fundraiser, each year the Boy Scouts collect food door-to-door and contribute it to AFAC.

In addition, the Stamp Out Hunger Day sponsored by the letter carriers generally yields about 30,000 pounds of food. It is held the second Saturday of May and will fall on May 13 this year. “Hopefully it will be as good this year because we can really use the donations,” Meng says.

Cash contributions are also encouraged, and can be made online. <https://afac.org/donate/>

AFAC is an independent, community-based non-profit food pantry that provides dignified access to nutritious supplemental groceries to Arlington neighbors in need. AFAC has recently expanded its services by opening a site in Falls Church and another in the City of Alexandria.

ARLINGTON/ALEXANDRIA ENVIRONMENTAL BRIEFS

E-CARE

E-CARE, Arlington’s twice annual environmentally friendly drop-off event, returns on Saturday, April 15, at Wakefield High School, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Residents can safely and quickly dispose of household hazardous materials and old electronics. For more details and a list of what is accepted, visit the County website at <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Programs/Recycling-and-Trash/Household-Hazardous-Materials-HHM/E-CARE>.

The event is for Arlington residents only and no commercial waste will be accepted. Materials accepted include: Automotive fluids, Batteries, Car care products, Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs), Corrosives (acids/caustics), Fire extinguishers, Flammable solvents, Fluorescent tubes, Fuels/petroleum products, Household cleaners, Lawn and garden chemicals, Mercury, Paint products (25-can limit), Photographic chemicals, Poisons (pesticides), Printer ink/toner cartridges, Propane gas cylinders (small hand-held or larger) and Swimming pool chemicals.

Show hours: Sunday, April 16, 2023, 10am-4pm

The Arlington Artists Alliance returns to the historic Hendry House at Fort C.F. Smith Park for “Spring Artful Weekend.” This show is a perennial favorite in the Arlington community, drawing hundreds of visitors annually. Spring Artful Weekend features artwork by 30+ Arlington Artists Alliance members and has been an annual show for the Arlington-based arts collective for over 20 years. With a large variety of art genres to choose from—paintings, ceramics, jewelry, sculpture, glasswork, artist’s cards, and more—this show is perfect to kick-off Spring. This event is free and open to the public.

The Arlington Artists Alliance and Gallery Underground are supported in part by Arlington County through Arlington Cultural Affairs, the Virginia Commission for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, Amazon, the National Landing BID, JBG Smith, and Sotheby’s. Visit <http://www.arlingtonartistsalliance.org>

NORTHERN ALEXANDRIA NATIVE PLANT SALE

Saturday, April 29, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the parking lot of The Church of St. Clement at 1701 N. Quaker Lane. (Masks are no longer required, but free masks will be available if you want one.) Come find native perennials, shrubs, and trees for sun or shade. Nine or more vendors from Virginia, Mary-

land, and Pennsylvania will be at this event, the largest native plant sale in the D.C. metro region.

Vendors are listed on the sale website at www.NorthernAlexandriaNativePlantSale.org. The sale is organized and run by volunteers. Questions? Contact Scott Knudsen at 571-232-0375 or cscottknudsen@gmail.com.

MASTER GARDENERS OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA APRIL 2023 PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS

VCE-MGNV Virtual Classroom public education events for April 2023 are online and open to all. RSVP online at <https://mgmv.org/rsvp-for-public-education-classes/> to receive the link to participate. Click on the event titles to RSVP for each event. If you can’t join a live online presentation, video recordings of the sessions will be posted to <https://mgmv.org/mg-virtual-classroom/>.

April is the month to plant and celebrate TREES! No need to wait for Earth Day (April 22nd) or Arbor Day (April 28th) to select and plant a tree to enrich your home landscape. The fact sheets on native trees within the MGNV Tried and True Native Plant Selections for the Mid-Atlantic are a rich online resource. After you have planted your tree, watch “Best Bets: Native Plants for Shade” on April 21 for ground covers that will protect your tree’s roots as well as providing their own beauty.

UPCOMING ELECTION

Democratic Primary Is June 20; Early Voting Begins May 5 2023

The list of candidates and their filing status will be updated as more information becomes available. Ballot order will be determined once the candidate has qualified.

<https://vote.arlingtonva.gov/Elections>

First day of In-Person Early Voting: May 5, 2023

Last day to register to vote or update existing registration: May 30, 2023

Last day to apply for a mail ballot: 5pm, June 9, 2023

CANDIDATES AND OFFICES

State Senate - 40th District

Barbara A. Favola
James A. DeVita

Virginia House of Delegates - 2nd District

Adele Y. McClure
Kevin S. Saucedo Broach

Commonwealth’s Attorney

Joshua D. Katcher
Parisa Dehghani-Tafti

County Board

Maureen E. Coffey
Jonathan Dromgoole
Natalie U. Roy
Julius D. “JD” Spain, Sr.
G. O. “Tony” Weaver
Susan R. Cunningham

Sheriff

James A. M. Herring
Jose R. Quiroz, Jr.
Wanda R. Younger