

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

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Gala-goers Celebrate Gardening, Art and Conservation



PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH/THE GAZETTE

The early 20th century house at River Farm houses AHS's offices.

American Horticultural Society's gala at River Farm.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
THE GAZETTE

Nasturtiums brightened the dinner plates, parsley greened up the centerpieces and strawberries and rhubarb starred in the dessert. Plants were inside, outside and all around.

On a balmy Sept. 20 evening, 300 gardening enthusiasts gathered under a big white tent to celebrate gardening and to honor two champions at the American Horticultural Society's (AHS) gala at River Farm in the Mount Vernon area.

Welcoming guests, AHS President and Chief Executive Officer Suzanne LaPorte said, "Horticulture is essential to life. Plants and gardens feed us, cool our cities, purify our air and bring beauty into our lives."

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Skip Calvert, long-time Alexandria resident, local champion of River Farm, and former AHS Board member, and Scott C. Plein, AHS Board Chair. At the AHS 2025 Gala, Skip Calvert received the AHS Meritorious Service Award



PHOTOS BY MICHEL ANDRÉ GAUTHIER PHOTOGRAPHER, ATELIER IMAGES, LLC

Skip Calvert, long-time Alexandria resident, local champion of River Farm, and former AHS Board member, at the AHS 2025 Gala.



Suzanne LaPorte, AHS President and CEO, Skip Calvert, long-time Alexandria resident, local champion of River Farm, and former AHS Board member, and Scott C. Plein, AHS Board Chair.



PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH/THE GAZETTE

Guests enjoyed a three-course meal.



Brian Kemble, winner of AHS' prestigious 2025 Liberty Hyde Bailey Award, and Suzanne LaPorte, AHS President and CEO.

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH/THE CONNECTION



Illuminated Acorn by Kevin Carman.



Great Blue Heron III by David Turner.



Li Doo Mooh by Villagers in India's Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, made of a tropical plant, lantana camara and metal.

American Horticultural Society's Gala at River Farm

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They also offer us avenues for creativity, healing and self-expression. In a world that sometimes can feel overwhelming, gardens have a remarkable ability to surprise and delight us."



Anthropocene by Michael Alfano.

Board of Directors Chair Scott Plein presented Brian Kemble the 2025 Liberty Hyde Bailey Award for lifetime achievement in horticulture. Kemble, the curator at the Ruth Bancroft Garden and Nursery in Walnut Creek, California, described how American gardening has moved from being "Eurocentric" to adapting to local conditions, like arid gardens in parts of California.

Plein also gave the Meritorious Service Award to Alexandrian Skipp Calvert, calling the awardee "a conservationist and a cheerleader." Plein said that Calvert was one of the "Faithful Five" who served on the AHS Board for two decades and helped save River Farm from being sold and developed in 2021. "His impact is beyond any title," Plein said.

In 2020, the then-AHS Board of Directors announced plans to sell River Farm, generat-

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Multi-colored Totem by Dorothy Gillespie.



Challenge, by Vadim Kharchenko,



Mama and Baby Frog by Charles Smith.



The Little Big Band provided music as guests mingled.

American Horticultural Society's Gala

FROM PAGE 12

ing shock waves among supporters who contended that since River Farm is prime waterfront property, developers would pounce on it. Local groups, many elected officials and then Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam mobilized to preserve the property, block development and retain public access. Ultimately the Board re-organized and abandoned the sale plan.

Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck remarked, "I deeply appreciate all the folks who worked to save River Farm."

Plein said that a major related announcement is forthcoming.

Among the notables attending in addition to Storck were Virginia Senators Scott Surovell and Russet Perry and former House of Delegates member Kris Amundsen. Surovell is the Senate Majority Leader.

Art in the Gardens

Nepenthe Gallery, based in the Hollin Hall Shopping Center, staged fanciful sculptures throughout the gardens, works by Vadim Kharchenko, Kevin Carman, Dorothy Gillespie, David Turner, Charles Smith, Michael Alfano, Staci Katsias, Brandon Reese, and Villagers in India's Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. Some pieces were for sale, with prices ranging from \$9,500 to \$38,000.

"We love any opportunity to partner with AHS at George Washington's historic River Farm, and the artists whose works we are showcasing feel that it is a special place," said gallery owner Carrie Garland. "The project is art at its very best, lifting others up and connecting us all in unexpected ways."

Alexandrian Angela Barbour wore a floral print dress and said, "River Farm's a gem. The fact that they truly saved it in perpetuity is truly exciting."

Lynn Godek, a kindergarten teacher who lives in the Mount Vernon area, nurtures young gardeners, she explained, by having children plant kidney beans and watch them grow. "You only need dirt, water and sun," she quipped.



After the speeches and meal, guests danced to music by K Street Union.



Many guests wore plant-themed attire.

PHOTOS BY
GLENDA BOOTH
THE CONNECTION

Many guests wore
plant-themed attire.

Why was she there? "I believe in the mission of AHS and the importance of maintaining green space and bringing gardening into everyone's life," she said.

Referring to the gala, LaPorte announced, "We passed our fund raising goals."

About AHS and River Farm

Founded in 1922, AHS is a member-based, national, nonprofit organization which in-



cludes more than 20,000 aspiring, new and experienced gardeners, plant enthusiasts, horticultural professionals and many regional and national partner organizations. AHS sponsors educational programs, awards, publications and trips. River Farm is a 25-acre site overlooking the Potomac River, one of George Washington's original five farms. Visit ahsgardening.org

Small Window to Apply for Affordable Housing Spots

FROM PAGE 5

How to Apply

Interested individuals can apply on the Fairfax County Housing and Community Development website. Application instructions are available in English and Spanish.

Individuals who need assistance can call 703-449-9050 or visit the FCRHA office at 3700 Pender Drive in Fairfax, VA during normal business hours 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

How Waitlist Applications Work

Applications will be selected at random and placed on the waitlist. Once a unit becomes available, the waitlist applicants will be contacted, screened, and determined eligible based on income level, household size, and the size of the rental unit.

Applications are not yet open at these properties beyond the above Project-Based Voucher waitlist opportunities

Additional homes at Indigo at McLean Station, not included in this waitlist opportunity, are expected to become available in Spring 2026. Please contact the property directly for more information and monitor IndigoMcLeanStation.com for updates.

Fairfax Crest is anticipated to become available in 2027. Those interested in applying to other units, not included in this waitlist opportunity, should monitor the website of the property developer, www.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Lincoln Avenue Communities, for updates.

About the Project-Based Voucher Program

The Project-Based Voucher program is a subsidized rental housing program where households pay a portion of the rent up to 35 percent of the adjusted gross household income, while the FCRHA pays the remaining portion of the rent to the owner. Program participants are ineligible to receive other Federal Housing Assistance subsidies.

Other Housing Waitlist Opportunities

The Housing Choice Voucher and Fairfax County Rental Program waitlists are currently closed. However, interested persons are encouraged to reach out to the communities below who might have waitlist opportunities. Please contact the community directly to inquire about their specific waitlist.

Crescent Apartments (Reston): 703-471-4663
Gum Springs Glen (Alexandria): 703-780-9072
Herndon Harbor House I and II (Herndon): 703-904-9444
Hopkins Glen (Falls Church): 703-207-9770
Morris Glen (Alexandria): 703-719-7268
Stonegate Village Apartments (Reston): 703-620-0203
Mount Vernon Gardens Apartments (Alexandria): 571-388-3473
Wedgewood Apartments (Annandale) and Little River Square (Annandale): 703-256-0400.

Practically Pavlovian



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I first heard/read about Ivan Pavlov in the fall of 1972. How can I be so specific? Because that's when I matriculated to the University of Maryland. And Ivan Pavlov was a topic of my Psychology 100 class. A class so large, over 600 hundred, that - at least where I sat near the back, could barely see him - or his canine companion (I don't remember the dog ever barking, by the way). The professor spoke into a microphone attached to a cord which he wore around his neck. He was going through various slides illuminated on the canvas behind him and commenting on them. There was never any stoppage to ask any questions or to clarify anything he had just said. We were meant to listen, not interrupt and relearn (learn the first time) all the information he was teaching by studying our textbook. This process was foreign to me. I never was taught in the fashion that I was now being subjected (yes subjected) and expected to grasp the lessons. Neither could/would I thrive by taking multiple choice exams, being graded on a bell curve (results of which were posted out the lecture hall), and never interacting with the professor. I got my first and only "D" in this class and I was probably lucky not to fail. I remember these feelings all too well, but I remember very little else except - wait for it: Ivan Pavlov.

Likewise, I can't remember if the class was held Mon./Wed./Fri at 8:00 am for 50 minutes or Tues./Thurs. from 8:00 am for 75 minutes. Neither can I remember the professor's name, nor the breed or name of his dog. I do remember he always dressed in black leather pants and a dark shirt and certainly never a sport coat. As for his many teachings and references to the textbook that we all bought at The Maryland Book Exchange, I remember very little except Pavlov's dog experiments. Pavlov discovered an animal behavior/human interaction that us pet owners (certainly dog owners) have come to rely on when training our puppies: "Classical Conditioning." Something to do with a "learned response" resulting from a "neutral stimulus." Moreover, he discovered dogs "could be trained to salivate at the sound of a bell after it was paired with the presentation of food." (I get that way myself.) A more literal description: your dog comes/obeys you when there's a reward (food) for doing so.

Well, it's been over 130 years since Pavlov's experiments/research (they occurred the 1890s) and the worm, as is often colloquialized, has, at least in my house, finally turned. No more is the human (yours truly) the one doing the prompting. It is now the dog who prompts the human. (Moreover, in a parallel universe, the cat is also prompting/conditioning the human, but that's another paragraph.) As for my three-year-old male golden retriever Burton, he manifests a simple but recurring behavior when he wants/needs to go out: He gets up from wherever he is and walks throughout the house until he finds me, always me (we've bonded) and stands steady on all fours and stares at me. He will remain in that position until I acquiesce and say something like "OKAY Burton, I know you want to go out. Let's go." Then he turns tail, literally, and trots into the kitchen where he waits to be "leashed" up by yours truly before he gets to go "out." We don't have a fenced-in yard, so Burton has to be walked. After he goes outside first thing in the morning with Dina, the rest of the time (day and night) I am responsible for his comings and goings. This standing and staring behavior is repeated by Burton four to five times throughout the day. He comes into any room where I am, stands and stares at me until I get up, then he gets to go out. Very simple. He has me "conditioned."

It's the same story with Andrew, our cancer-surviving cat; when he walks into the kitchen, I know he's hungry. That's when I give him food. Other times, I'll put the food on the floor: nothing. However, when we meet in the kitchen, he'll sit by his bowl, look up at me and I know he wants me to get him some food. His terms. Not mine.

These kinds of behaviors are all too familiar to dog and cat owners. It's the cost of doing business, so to speak. You have to give up control and in so doing, acknowledge that you are at the animal's mercy. It's akin to the inmates running the asylum except in this context, it's not the inmates who are crazy.

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.