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A mural of a Mexican luchador painted by artist David Amoroso dominates the back dining room at Urbano 116.

A touch of urban(o) flair

New Mexican concept spices up King Street

BY MISSY SCHROTT

Crossing the hot pink entryway into Urbano 116 feels more like slipping into a high-end cocktail bar off the streets of Mexico City than it does going out for a bite in Old Town.

Geometric tiles line the floor and bar. Sleek black barstools are offset by white-washed, exposed brick walls. Masked luchadores glare out from brightly lit display cases. A neon pink sign has you longing for churros.

“What we wanted to create was the opposite of what Old Town is known for,” Chad Sparrow, a member of Common Plate Hospitality, the three-man restaurant group behind Urbano 116, said. “We wanted something where you walk in, and you don’t feel like you’re in Old Town. You feel like you’re in New York or Miami or D.C., just somewhere that has a more urban vibe, a more hip, trendy vibe.”

Years in the works, Urbano 116 has been one of the most anticipated restaurants not only in Alexandria, but

SEE **URBANO**

| 5

INSIDE

Tying the Knot

An Alexandria librarian and a VTS student share their love story.

Page 17

The Garden

New co-building space on Eisenhower provides tools for small businesses.

Page 8

Parking pilot sparks tensions

Old Town pay-by-phone program slated for Saturday’s public hearing

BY CODY MELLO-KLEIN

The pay-to-park pilot program currently operating in Old Town, which is slated for possible permanent implementation at Saturday’s city council public hearing, is causing tempers to flare citywide.

The program has achieved its intended objective of making it easier for impacted residents to park on their blocks. But

SEE **PARKING**

| 13



FILE PHOTO

Old Town’s pay-by-phone parking program is slated for possible permanent implementation and expansion on Saturday.

City manager proposes FY2020 budget

Includes higher property assessments, no tax rate hike, full schools funding

BY MISSY SCHROTT

City Manager Mark Jinks’ Fiscal Year 2020 proposed budget involves no real estate tax rate increase, no major service reductions and full funding for the school superintendent’s request.

Jinks formally presented the proposed operating budget of \$761.1 million, a 1.7 percent increase over last year, to members of

“

I am especially appreciative that the manager prioritized our growing schools in this budget. Now the council’s hard work begins as we work to balance our community’s priorities in a constrained revenue environment.”

– Mayor Justin Wilson

city council at a special meeting Tuesday night.

While putting together the budget, Jinks said he had directed city departments to submit budget reductions to offset the estimated budget gap and to ensure that the proposed budget maintained city services, as well as funding for schools and transportation.

The proposed budget fully funds Superintendent Gregory Hutchings’ request of \$232.3 million in operating funds for Alexandria

SEE **BUDGET**

| 10

BUSINESS

URBANO

FROM | 1

the entire D.C. region. Since opening on Jan. 21, it's been riding a steady buzz of non-stop patrons and margarita orders.

The 160-seat, authentic Mexican restaurant's success thus far can be attributed to the fast-growing restaurant group that brought it to life.

Common Plate Hospitality is made up of brothers Chad and Justin Sparrow and Larry Walston. Native Alexandrians and longtime friends, the trio in 2010 formed a construction company, Advanced Construction Group, which they still manage in addition to their restaurants.

It was Chad Sparrow who led the group's expansion into the food industry, and four years ago, they opened their first venture, Mason Social, on North Henry Street.

From the beginning, Chad Sparrow said, they had been interested in opening more than one restaurant. In the last year, that dream has taken off – they opened Catch on the Ave in Del Ray in December and are on track to open Augie's Mussel House on upper King Street this summer – but early on, the group knew a Mexican restaurant would be its crowning jewel.

"We always wanted to do a Mexican restaurant," Chad Sparrow said. "That was always kind of my passion. Growing up, I went to culinary school and trained in the southwestern cuisine, so that was always going to be something that we wanted to do."

They had begun looking at restaurant spaces for their Mexican concept in 2016, and when they heard about an opening at 116 King St., they acted quickly.

"It was kind of a no brainer on the location," Chad Sparrow said. "Even though there was a lot of work and a lot of stuff to do, it was like,



Top: Carnitas Tacos. **Above:** The bar at the front of Urbano 116 features a bar top along windows that will open onto King Street, as well as a walk-up churro window advertised with a neon pink sign.

okay, this location doesn't come up very often, so we thought this was definitely the place we'd go all in. We were like, 'This is definitely going to be our Mexican place, kind of our main, main location.'"

Before Urbano 116, the space had been occupied by a pop-up shop called 116 King and, before that, a home and gift store called Decorium. Because it had never been a restaurant, extensive renovations were necessary.

"We also had the luxury of owning a construction company here in the city and so we took that through ourselves and did all the build-

out," Justin Sparrow said.

The group faced some challenges as it went through Alexandria's administrative processes, including getting permission for a carryout Churro window.

"You can go across the [river] at the [D.C.] Wharf and do administrative approvals and just sort of roll into construction," Justin Sparrow said, "Versus here, [where] you're kind of subject to all the public approvals and all the hearings, opinions, and so that's a big hurdle."

Despite the challenges, they decided it was worth it for the restaurant group to have its flagship restaurant

“There's just a preconceived notion ... that Mexican food should be cheap, Mexican food should be abundant, it should be really fast, it should be rice and beans, it should be heavy, and ... real Mexican food is not like that. So I think a lot of it is an education process.”

– Chad Sparrow, managing partner, Common Plate Hospitality

can dining experience. Part of that meant straying from the food and atmosphere of a typical American Tex-Mex restaurant.

Design-wise, Chad Sparrow said they chose the Luchador theme because it was different from the Día del los Muertos design that most Mexican restaurants have. They hired a Mexican artist, David Amoroso, to paint Urbano's walls with the statement Luchador masks that mark each of the restaurant's booths, as well as the mural-sized Mexican fighter that dominates the back dining room.

"It's something we're trying to do across all of our concepts: give something from a design side that's just a little bit different that people feel is fun and new and adds some vibrancy," Justin Sparrow said. "We're trying to bring some flair."

Regarding food, Chad Sparrow said their menu challenges customers to view Mexican food differently.

"There's just a preconceived notion, I think, in the United States that Mexican food should be cheap, Mexican food should be abundant, it should be really fast, it should be rice and beans, it should be heavy," he said, "and that's not what this is. Real Mexican food is not like that, so I think a lot of it is an education process."

in its hometown.

"Our plans are to eventually expand into D.C.," Chad Sparrow said. "But we're from Alexandria. We're born and raised here, so we always wanted to have the foundation in Alexandria. With Augie's coming up as well, another big King Street spot, and we have Catch [on the Ave] in Del Ray, I think those four locations, we'll have a strong blueprint and foundation."

After moving past the permitting phases, the group began to fine-tune Urbano's design. The partners said their ultimate goal was to provide an authentic Mexi-

BUSINESS

URBANO

FROM | 5

While planning the restaurant, Common Plate Hospitality team members took a trip to Mexico to educate themselves. They hired a food blogger to take them on a tour of everything from street markets to farms to high-end restaurants to help them determine what kind of ambiance to create in Urbano 116.

During the tour, Chad Sparrow said the group was especially inspired by Polanco, a neighborhood in Mexico City reminiscent of Los Angeles' Beverly Hills.

"Polanco is one of the more trendy neighborhoods in Mexico City," Chad Sparrow said. "It's a very industrial, vibrant, craft cocktail scene and just a really cool scene, so we wanted to kind of bring that vibrancy here, and I think we really have it. It's very reminiscent of walking into the places that we went to over there."

The group also found Urbano's chef, the award-winning Alam Méndez, on the food tour. Eating at Méndez' Oaxacan restaurant Pasillo de Humo, Chad Sparrow said he was impressed with the tortillas and moles.

"We started talking to him and asked if he'd come over for a week and train our staff," Chad Sparrow said. "I was like, 'We'll just bring him over and train the staff and that'll kind of give us a one up and some real authenticity.'"

In the early stages of the collaboration, however, Chad Sparrow said he realized he wanted Méndez to be a permanent part of Urbano 116 and offered him a job. Méndez accepted, and after getting his O1 Visa, became head chef at the restaurant.

"We feel really fortunate that we have him here," Chad Sparrow said. "I think we would've been really good



Larry Walston, Justin Sparrow and Chad Sparrow make up restaurant group Common Plate Hospitality.

PHOTO/
MISSY
SCHROTT

if he hadn't come, it still would've been a good spot, but with him, it just was that extra step of higher-level execution and just an authenticity that you don't get in D.C. at all."

Like everything else about Urbano, its menu and ingredients exude authenticity.

"Moles are a huge part of our menu," Chad Sparrow said. "We have seven different moles. There's the black mole ... a 100-year-old recipe — it's 32 ingredients and takes two days to make. They're very labor-intensive processes to make these sauces."

They also make their corn and flour tortillas in house.

"We source all our corn from Oaxaca, Mexico," Chad Sparrow said. "There are only six varieties of corn in the U.S. In Oaxaca, they have 59 varieties still. ... We never know what heirloom corn we're going to be seeing. Sometimes it's red variety, pink, purple, blue, yellow, dark yellow, all these differ-

ent colors, and they all have a unique flavor. So when we get the corn, we go through a process called nixtamalization. This is a 2,000-year-old

process that was before the Mayans."

On the bar menu, Urbano 116 has 20 mezcals — more than any location in Virginia.

"You don't know a lot about mezcal if you're in the United States and forever, like Mexican food, it was the really cheap mezcal that had the worm in it. It was considered below tequila," Chad Sparrow said. "In Mexico, instead of drinking wine when you sit down, they give you mezcal. And you drink mezcal in a shot format. You can either sip it or take the whole thing, and you finish it with an orange that's dipped in worm salt. So we actually bring the worm salt in from Mexico as well."

While getting buy-in for the level of authenticity that Urbano 116 provides has required some customer education, the owners said the response thus far has been overwhelmingly positive.

"We're under a spotlight, and the bar is extremely high, and the tolerance for mistakes is very, very low,"

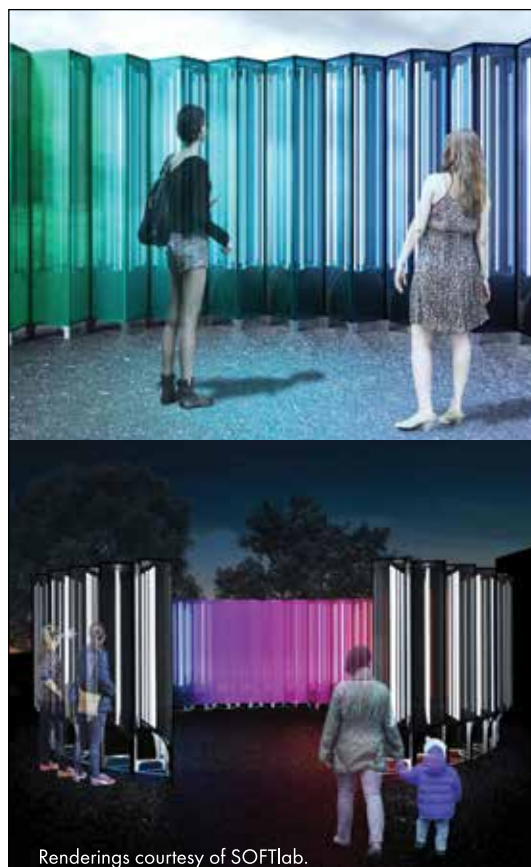
Justin Sparrow said. "But that comes with the territory. It's great, we're excited, we're glad that we're under that microscope, because ... everything that we're doing is a labor of love, so to be able to showcase that to everyone is fabulous and exciting and once you taste it, experience it, it's different."

He attributed much of Common Plate Hospitality's fast-growing success to its team.

"We can't do what we do without the wonderful people that we have," Justin Sparrow said. "Everyone plays a vital part, and you're only as good as the people that are in front of you, and that's a constant reminder that it's not just three of us, it's a few hundred people that make this happen."

Urbano 116 is open daily for lunch and dinner. Its hours are Monday through Wednesday 11 a.m. to midnight, Thursday through Saturday 11 a.m. to 2 a.m. and Sunday 10 a.m. to midnight.

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Renderings courtesy of SOFTlab.

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Budget passes without tax rate hike

Schools fully funded, transportation, city vehicle spending increased

BY MISSY SCHROTT

Council unanimously adopted the fiscal year 2020

operating budget on May 1, maintaining the real estate tax rate for the second year in a row.

This year's general fund budget, which is composed of funds from local property taxes and other local taxes, fees and fines,

is \$761,542,268. This is an increase of 1.75 percent, or \$13,115,332, over FY2019.

This is the second year in a row council has voted to maintain the real estate tax rate at \$1.13 per \$100 of assessed value. Council voted in March to advertise the

maximum real estate tax rate at \$1.135, but the budget council adopted does not increase the rate.

While the tax rate remains steady, there is an increase in property tax revenue year over year because property values rose.

Revenue from property taxes increased from a projected \$450.2 million in FY2019 to the approved \$462.8 million in FY2020, an increase of about \$12.6 million. Because of this increase, the

SEE **BUDGET** | 10

Lost Boy Cider finds its home

Tristan Wright opens first urban cidery in Northern Virginia

BY MISSY SCHROTT

Lost Boy Cider began when a commercial banker decided to uproot his life and start brewing booze.

It was 2015 when the trajectory of Rosemont resident Tristan Wright's life began to shift from banking executive to ciderymaker. Four years later, Lost Boy Cider, the first urban cidery in Northern Virginia, is slated to open in a warehouse off of Eisenhower Avenue in early June.

An unexpected illness sparked Wright's vocational 180. He had spent months dealing with mounting

SEE **CIDER** | 6



COURTESY PHOTO

Artist Keith Grubbs painted the Lost Boy mural outside of the cidery on Tuesday.

School of Rock brings the noise to Alexandria

Music educator offers performance-based lessons for young rockers

BY CODY MELLO-KLEIN

Most businesses herald their grand openings with a simple ribbon cutting. The team behind the new School of Rock in Alexandria celebrated the occasion a little differently – by smashing some guitars on stage.

School of Rock is the SEE **ROCK** | 8

largest multi-location music school in the world, with more than 200 locations across the globe, according to its website. Its new location in Alexandria, headed by general manager and owner Steve McKay, opened at 3260 Duke St. on Saturday.

With the Alexandria community's emphasis on music and arts education, it was a logical place for the company to locate,

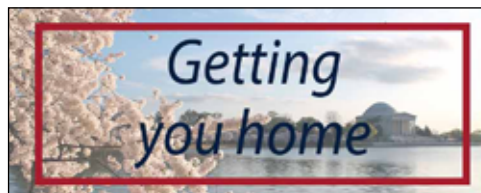
INSIDE

Schools

Catch up on school happenings in Alexandria. Page 13

Foodie

What's in your pantry? Here are 15 must-have items. Page 17



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BUSINESS

CIDER

FROM | 1

headaches and joint pain before he ended up in a hospital halfway through a family vacation. When doctors couldn't figure out what was wrong, he underwent about four months of testing, the uncertainty weighing on Wright and his family.

"We [had] just had our second kid, and we [had] just bought our forever house, and it was not good," Wright said. "There was a moment where I thought that the doctor was coming to tell me, 'That's it.'"

Rather than delivering the fatal diagnosis Wright had been expecting, his doctor brought good news; they had figured out what was wrong.

"Long story short, I'm not dying; I have a severe soy allergy," Wright said. "Severe. So for like 38 years, I'd been poisoning myself. My body couldn't keep up. It was basically shutting down. ... There is soy in everything that we eat."



Left: Four of the tanks in the cidery's "tank farm" are fermenters for the ciders, while one of them force carbonates them. **Right:** Wright's mother, a master gardener, helped him plant eight apple trees in front of the cidery. Having the "orchard" out front allows Wright to operate the space as a farm winery with a tasting room.



PHOTOS/MISSY SCHROTT

Wright said the experience, from thinking he was dying to learning his illness was treatable, led him to rethink his life.

"I was like, 'Man, am I happy?'" Wright said. "I looked in the mirror and I was like, 'I ... hate what I

do, if I'm being really honest with myself. I do not like my hour commute, I don't like the guy I'm working for, and it's all about cash.'"

Having decided to change career paths, Wright's pursuit of cider was born out of his new soy-free

diet. After a period of time during which Wright drank no alcohol at all, his doctor recommended he start reintroducing it, swapping beer and whiskey for soy-free alternatives like wine.

"She goes, 'Why don't you go out to the store and get some wine?'" Wright said. "I told her I was going to the baseball game, and I'm like, 'I'm not going to go to the baseball game and drink [wine] with my buddies sitting in 88-degree weather.' And she goes, 'Well, all the kids are drinking cider these days.'"

Wright said the mention of cider bought back fond memories of his honeymoon in Ireland and inspired him to start looking into the cider scene in the D.C. region.

"There wasn't a lot of great cider at the time," Wright said. "[I] realized that there are people in pockets of the country making incredible cider, and that nobody was really doing it locally for us. And off to the races. ... I was like ... 'I'm going to make booze. I'm going to bring people together, and we're going to have fun.'"

Wright enrolled in the cider production program at Oregon State University, then went on to pursue a degree in viticulture and enology – winemaking studies – at Cornell University. Shortly after, he started looking for a place in Alexandria to put the cidery.

"I told Tristan in the very beginning that it wouldn't be easy," Mike Porterfield of Tartan Properties said, "and that it would be more of an endurance event rather than a sprint to finding the right space, and I think that was truly the case."

After spending the better part of two years looking at properties and negotiating leases, Porterfield found the cidery's home in an old print shop at 317 Hooffs Run Drive.

"I truly think this is the best of all that we looked at," Porterfield said. "I knew right away that that was an ideal building for him. ... It's just in a great part of town that's growing quickly, so we jumped on it right away."

In addition to Tartan Properties, Wright sought

SEE CIDER

| 7

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BUSINESS

CIDER

FROM | 6

help from the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership for everything from finding the space to navigating the city's permitting processes.

"We think it's going to be catalytic in that area," Adrienne Griffith, marketing and communications coordinator with AEDP, said. "All that growth in the Carlyle, Eisenhower area, this is going to be another great place for people that are living in the apartments over there or parents that are having soccer practice on those fields."

Two-and-a-half years after the search began, an ABC license has been granted, the 2,000-gallon fermenters have been installed, the apple trees have been planted and Lost Boy is all but ready to open.

A small orchard space along the road with eight



COURTESY RENDERING

A rendering of the interior of Lost Boy Cider. Rather than designing the space to look like a finished bar, Wright said he's embracing the industrial look of the building since the cidery is, first and foremost, a production space.

apple trees allows Wright to operate the space as a farm winery with a tasting room, since cider is technically wine made from apples.

Lost Boy's occupancy permit allows 79 people,

although Wright said he's looking to increase it to around 120 and to include an outdoor seating and game area. Inside, the tasting counter will have 12 taps for cider. The space's design

will feature a lot of plant life and natural light, while still maintaining the industrial vibe of a cider making facility.

"I'm not painting in here, I'm leaving it as is," Wright

said. "It's really a working cidery, so we're not trying to build like a Georgetown bar that's all finished and fancy and what not. It's production space, so I thought people might enjoy that."

The tasting room will be open from 4 to 9 p.m. during the week and 4 to 10 p.m. on the weekends. Wright said he might extend weekend hours to be open noon to 10 p.m., depending on demand. The cidery will also be available for special events.

While the cidery's tasting room will be one of its major attractions, the facility is primarily a working cidery capable of producing up to 60,000 gallons of cider a year, though Wright said he suspected it won't start at that scale. He said he's in the process of figuring out the logistics of distribution and how to get his products from

SEE CIDER

| 25

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CIDER FROM | 7

the warehouse to grocery store shelves.

"I do want to build a mid-Atlantic presence and become somebody," Wright said. "We want to be down at the baseball stadium, and we want people outside of Alexandria to know about us."

The process of making the cider itself begins at Glaize Apples, a fifth-generation family orchard in Winchester, Virginia, where Wright will get most of his apples. The orchard employees will pick and juice the apples, then ship them to Lost Boy, where they await the fermenting, aging, carbonating and pasteurizing processes that transform them into cider.

Lost Boy's ciders won't be as sweet as some of the mass-produced ciders like Angry Orchard or Bold Rock, Wright said. Instead, most will be fully dry, the majority with less than five grams of sugar and under 100 calories per 12-ounce pour, Wright said. Their flagship cider, "Comeback Kid," will be a crisp, dry cider with about three grams of sugar.

"There generally will be less than [five] grams of sugar in anything that you consume, which is really one of the issues with ciders, the sweetness," Wright said. "You don't want to put a lot of sugar in your body if you can help it. You get the headaches, or the stomach aches or the whatever, and generally it's just not that healthy to have 30 grams of sugar."

The cidemaker at Lost Boy, Kevin Storm, is a former brewer from Hardywood Park Craft Brewery in Richmond. Wright said Storm will be experimenting with seasonal flavors, including pineapple and watermelon for the summer, pumpkin spice in the fall and Christmas tree for the holidays.

"We're going to put a

“ I’ve always chased something. [I’m] not sure what I was chasing or who I was trying to prove anything to, so I named it ‘Lost Boy’ because I think the apples kind of found me.”

– Tristan Wright, owner, Lost Boy Cider



PHOTO/MISSY SCHROTT

Christmas tree in one of these smaller tanks and we're gonna ferment that," Wright said. "We'll add back some cranberry juice and some ginger ... so probably 10 kegs of that, send it out, see what the response is."

While cider has been around since as early as 18 A.D., according to Wright, it lost a lot of its momentum during the prohibition era. Cider is making a comeback – as Lost Boy's signature "Comeback Kid" cider alludes to – and because of that, a big part of opening a cidery is education.

"We're basically front-tiering a new market. People don't totally understand cider," Wright said. "Orchard-based juice that's not wholesale, mass-produced, that's 100 percent juice, low residual sugar ... it's not beer."

Cider might not be beer, but Lost Boy is on track to have the same lively, comfortable atmosphere patrons experience at Alexandria's Port City Brewing Company.

"It's no surprise how suc-

cessful Port City is, and I suspect that, because of the level of preparation Tristan has put into [Lost Boy], I just don't think he's going to do anything other than skyrocket with his success," Porterfield said.

"I'm doing my best," Wright said. "I'm ensuring the wine-making process will be on par with the best cidermaking processes in the country. And so from there, I just hope people embrace it. So we'll see."

As for the cidery's name, Wright said "Lost Boy" is a nod to the life he's leaving behind.

"I was on this path of commercial banking, and in my 20s, I was really ambitious, like a lot of people, and I wanted to prove something to somebody," Wright said. "I've always chased something. [I'm] not sure what I was chasing or who I was trying to prove anything to, so I named it 'Lost Boy' because I think the apples kind of found me. I didn't know I was lost. That's the story."

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small business spotlight

Former CIA analyst starts family history business

Lisa Maddox takes genealogy beyond the family tree

BY MISSY SCHROTT

Lisa Maddox, a former Central Intelligence Agency analyst, has big plans to give ancestry.com a run for its money.

With a passion for genealogy and a background in intel, Maddox established family history business Narratio Vitae about a year ago.

Narratio Vitae is Latin for “life story.” A one-woman operation, Maddox builds the life stories of her clients and their ancestors, often starting with only snippets of unverified and sometimes inaccurate information.

Unlike ancestry.com and other popular genealogy sites, Maddox goes beyond names and dates to create dynamic, engaging family histories.

“You have people that have their photo albums and their scrapbooks, and then you’ve got the ancestry.com people that love the research and are digging into the details,” Maddox said. “My services can kind of bring those things together and complete the loop in a way.”



Lisa Maddox, founder and owner of Narratio Vitae.

PHOTO/MISSY SCHROTT

Maddox packages her final product as a private website that clients can share with their families. Each family history is unique, composed of a collection of timelines, family trees and text. Maddox writes the narratives her-

self, focusing on whatever ancestors or time periods her clients request. With the website format, Maddox is able to create a multi-media history with photos, newspaper clips, audio clips and hyperlinks.

“Most people who say they’re going to do genealogy for you build you the tree, but that to me is where Lisa starts,” Maddox’s father-in-law, David Maddox, said. “She builds the tree, but [she adds] the stories, the insights, the understanding of your family that’s related to that tree, and I think she does a great job doing that.”

Before launching Narratio Vitae, Lisa Maddox spent about 15 years in the intelligence world, seven at the CIA and the remaining divided between the U.S. Department of State, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Maddox spent most of her intel career working in counterterrorism, motivated after witnessing the Sept. 11, 2001 attack against the Pentagon during her first week of graduate studies at Georgetown University.

“At [the] CIA, I was an analyst and an analytical



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manager there for all those years, working on a variety of issues, but it was kind of the skills that I gained there, just the research, the

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| 7

MADDOX FROM | 6
writing, argumentation, identifying leads and going after them, always verifying information, attention to sourcing, detail, pulling together tons of data into a concise story ... those skills, I've actually been able to apply to this new business," Maddox said.

Maddox began working on Narratio Vitae before she left government. She was inspired, she said, by her family.

"I have two daughters that are eight and nine, and after having them, your perspective kind of changes," Maddox said. "I started to really think about legacy and caring about family and them knowing my story and knowing my family story and my husband's family story and making sure that that wasn't lost on them."

Maddox was also inspired by her mother and grandfather, both of whom had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

"Firsthand, watching them lose their memories – and when you have those questions, they can't answer them anymore – had a big impact," Maddox said.

Since she began Narratio Vitae about a year ago, Maddox said she's had between 15 and 20 clients. Each project is different, and Maddox works with her clients to determine exactly what they want to find out.

"We'll scope a project with a client and it's all dependent on what kind of information is out there," Maddox said. "... I don't need much to start usually, so I need to understand what the client wants. Do they really want to learn about just their father's side? Do they want a broad brush of both sides of the family? And I'll typically go back three generations, but if I find an interesting story – and I usually do; every family has one buried – my goal is to really dig it up."

Maddox has traced families back to Plymouth Colony, George Washington and the founders of the U.S. Navy. Taking her clients' requests and initial information, Maddox uses books, search databases, immigration lists and old newspaper articles to fill in the gaps. She's also tracked down and interviewed some of the family members to add a

personal touch.

"I had a client come to me and go, 'So [my] grandfather's name was John Jones, [my] great grandfather's name was John Jones. They're from Ireland. Here's a couple

birthdates.' And I was like, 'Oh my gosh, are you serious?' But I found it. ... I think because of my former intel and targeting work I kind of have good techniques to suss out information and figure

out the story," Maddox said.

Maddox said she makes a special effort to include details and family stories that are left out of other geneal-

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Lisa Maddox, founder and owner of Narratio Vitae, works on a project at her kitchen table.

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2204 Mount Vernon Avenue

First Baptist Church
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Alexandria Fire Station 210
5255 Eisenhower Avenue

Can't make it to Drug Take Back Day?
Drop off medications year-round at one of these permanent drug drop box locations!

Neighborhood Pharmacy
2204 Mount Vernon Avenue
Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Saturday: 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Sunday: 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Inova Alexandria Hospital
4320 Seminary Road
Visitor's Lobby
Next to the cashier's window
Daily: 5 a.m. - 9 p.m.



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MADDOX

FROM | 7

ogy services.

"I don't just capture their huge accomplishments," Maddox said. "Like, what was their family life like? And the women are often forgotten in genealogy, so I make an extra point of researching who the wives were and what they went through and where they came from, and if I find something interesting up their family line, you betcha I'm going to go research it and pull it out."

David Million, a client who won Maddox's services at an

auction, had Maddox focus on his family's ties to wars.

"I specifically asked her to focus on the big war events: War of 1812, Revolutionary War, Civil War," Million said. "A lot of my ancestors, there's some really neat stuff. I have ancestors that go back to the Colony of Virginia. ... It's really kind of a crapshoot how lucky you get with these archives, what you can find, [but] she provided a lot more detail than I thought she would."

Million said the website prompted discussion in his family.

"It started the ball rolling for some of my other family members of what they could find," Million said. "... Eventually we're going to probably use her services to go a little deeper and find some of these characters in my family tree."

Another one of Maddox's clients, Mary Ann Meigs, hired Maddox because of a longtime fascination with one of her husband's ancestors. Maddox tracked down the relative, then traced that person's story to present day.

SEE MADDOX

| 12

MADDOX FROM | 10

“It was just a wonderful thing that she created,” Meigs said. “I look forward to getting other family members involved and adding pictures to it because everyone has a little bit of information, and they have letters and pictures, and it’s kind of spread across the U.S. It’d be nice to get it in one website.”

Because Maddox packages the histories on websites, the narrative doesn’t end when she delivers a final product to her clients, and families are able to edit and add to their sites over time.

“It’s a blog, so you expect family members to keep the conversation going,” Maddox said. “They can add to it, which is where that scrapbook might have ended. So, as stories of the grandchildren come up and you want

to preserve them as part of the family story and the legacy, you can just add to them. It’s very easy to do, so it promotes the discussion basically, which is the exciting thing about genealogy.”

Still in the early stages of the business, Maddox spends two to three weeks on each project, doing everything from client consultations and website design to research and writing. Maddox said once she gets Narratio Vitae off the ground, she hopes to expand.

“I am, at this point, pretty much a one-person shop, and I’d love to scale up if I get enough clientele,” Maddox said. “I’d love to hire researchers and kind of build this out because I do think it’s a really cool and viable idea.”

While some questioned Maddox’s decision to leave a successful intel career and



COURTESY IMAGE

An example of a Narratio Vitae product. Lisa Maddox compiles family histories on a website that families can share with relatives.

start her own business, Maddox said she’s proud of what she’s begun.

“I love how it’s made people excited about their

family histories and sparked those discussions, and I’ve seen it bring together family,” Maddox said. “It’s really gratifying and cool to be

able to do that.” To learn more about Narratio Vitae, visit narratiovitae.com. [-mschrott@alextimes.com](mailto:mschrott@alextimes.com)



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