

LoudounNow

VOL. 6, NO. 6

We've got you covered. In the mail weekly. Online always at LoudounNow.com

JANUARY 7, 2021



Patrick Szabo/Loudoun Now

AMC Loudoun Station 11 in Ashburn is one of three movie theaters in Loudoun County open amid the COVID-19 pandemic. State regulations require theaters to operate at a maximum capacity of 30%.

Return of the Big Screens

Movie Theaters Reopen, Optimistic for 2021

BY PATRICK SZABO
pszabo@loudounnow.com

Since last March, Loudouners have used their living room as movie theaters, downsizing their screens from 50 feet to 50 inches. For a few months, that was their only option. But now, half of the county's movie theaters are open and showing

films every day of the week, and they're expecting a turnaround in 2021.

While all three Regal theaters—at the Dulles Town Center, the Brambleton Town Center and in Countryside—have been closed since early October, AMC Loudoun Station 11 in Ashburn, the Alamo Drafthouse Cinema at One Loudoun, and CMX Cinemas Village 14 in the Vil-

lage at Leesburg are open at limited capacities. Per Gov. Ralph Northam's latest restrictive order, movie theaters are allowed to open at a maximum capacity of 30%.

With such relatively low attendance, theaters are functional, but largely just getting by.

Alamo Drafthouse Cinemas is doing less

THEATERS continues on page 30

Deputy, Security Officers Injured in Walmart Shootout

LOUDOUN NOW STAFF REPORT

A Loudoun Sheriff's deputy and two others were injured at the Walmart at Dulles Crossing Plaza following a shootout with a shoplifting suspect Saturday evening.

The incident occurred just before 5 p.m. Jan. 2 after loss prevention officers at the store, located off Atlantic Boulevard, detained a man on suspicion of stealing items. The suspect, described by police as a Hispanic male, was in a room with the civilian security officers waiting for deputies to arrive and take him into custody when he pulled a gun from his waistband and fired multiple rounds.

The two employees and one deputy were struck. They were transported to Reston Hospital for the treatment of injuries described as serious but not life threatening. Sheriff's Office Public Information Officer Kraig Troxell said Monday the deputy remains hospitalized but the security workers had been released.

The suspect ran from the store with another deputy chasing him. When they exchanged fire, the suspect was hit. However, he escaped the scene in a stolen pickup truck.

By 5:20 p.m., deputies were pur-

SHOOTOUT continues on page 29

Postal Customer
ECRWSS



PROPANE COSTS TOO MUCH!

Now is the Ideal Time to Make the Switch

Less • Local • Honest

540-687-3608 | huntcountrypropane.com

Theaters

continued from page 1

than 25% of the business it was doing this time last year, Vice President of Operations Scott Flanagan said.

"We're down significantly from last year," he said.

To help with finances, Alamo, which closed March 17 and reopened the first week in August, is operating only four days a week—Thursday to Sunday—from now through at least the end of February. Flanagan said consolidating to four days also helps the theater's employees, many of whom work for tips and prefer to work busier shifts on the weekends.

But what has been the biggest challenge for Alamo hasn't been a lack of movie-goers, Flanagan said. Instead, it has been the lack of content from Hollywood.

"That has probably hurt as much if not more than people being concerned about the safety," he said.

CMX Cinemas, which acquired Cobb Theaters in late 2017, was closed longer than Alamo. While CMX also closed in mid-March, it didn't reopen until Nov. 20. It's now open every day of the week.

This year looks brighter. Between April and August, 55 new movies are scheduled to hit the big screen, many of which will be films that were originally set to premier during 2020. And one of those will be the highly anticipated, 25th installment of the James Bond series, "No Time To Die," which was initially set to premier last April and is now set for an April 2 release date.

CMX Cinemas Chief Operating Officer Javier Ezquerro said his team is "actually very excited" about this year, when a new major movie is set to premier nearly every weekend.

"I've never seen a calendar year like 2021. It's stunning," he said.

COVID Cleaning Offers Peace of Mind

Theaters managers say their staffs are on top of the cleaning efforts. All six of Loudoun's theaters, which represent four theater companies, are members of the National Association of Theatre Owners. That organization operates the CinemaSafe program, which promotes protocols developed by epidemiologists aimed to safely usher guests back to theaters.

In addition to Alamo spending \$60,000 to upgrade HVAC filters and improve its fresh air intake system, all employees at the Drafthouse wear face masks and gloves at all times and have their temperatures checked at the back door before entering the theater. Crews also disinfect each theater after each

movie showing using vital oxide sprayed from an electrostatic sprayer.

Flanagan said vital oxide is one of the safest cleaning agents on the market. Giving an example, he said a person could use a fork that was sprayed by the chemical just 10 minutes prior. Of course, the Alamo staff doesn't spray utensils with the chemical.

And when a guest or group of guests purchase tickets at Alamo, two seats are automatically blocked off between them and the next group.

CMX Cinemas practices the same types of safety measures. Its ticketing system also automatically blocks off seats north, south, east and west of each group. And between each show, crews from the COVID Clear sanitization company use foggers to sanitize the air and surfaces inside the theaters.

Theaters Push Private Rentals

Loudoun's theaters are working to bring in more guests by advertising the rental of individual theaters to small groups.

CMX Cinemas offers those private rentals at prices starting at \$99. The theater also offers \$5 tickets all day long every "Terrific Tuesday." And on Sundays, CMX honors Hero Day, in which frontline workers receive free tickets at the box office.

At Alamo, personal theater rentals cost \$150 and require a \$150 minimum purchase of food and beverages for each group.

While that might seem costly at the outset, Flanagan clarified that if the rental cost is split between 10 people, the payoff is the ability to watch a movie in a theater that typically seats 100 people for \$15 extra a person. Flanagan said the \$150 food and beverage minimum is basically a given, since people typically purchase food and drinks anyway.

"It's actually, I think, a pretty good deal," he said.

Alamo also features the county's only active drive-in theater, which, Flanagan said, is keeping Alamo in business at the moment.

Drive-in Theaters Regain Popularity

While driving up to the base of a larger-than-life screen to watch movies from inside a car largely became outdated decades ago, the experience was reborn across the nation during 2020 as indoor theaters remained closed for the better part of summer.

Alamo's drive-in, located about five blocks from the theater, is the product of a partnership with One Loudoun that began in August. There, 186 cars can park in 18-foot spaces for their passengers to tune into FM 94.3 and watch movies on the big screen—a 4K laser projection screen that

costs \$40,000, with accompanying equipment that costs even more. Guests can also order from Alamo's menu and have their food delivered straight to their cars. Flanagan said that service is just as prompt as it is inside the theater.

"It was a big chance for us ... but it's paid off," he said.

And paid off, it did. Flanagan said the Ashburn drive-in was the 45th highest grossing theater in the nation for the opening weekend of "Wonder Woman 1984."

"For opening weekend, it cranked," he said.

Andrea Khoury, the president of the Khoury Media Group that heads public relations for One Loudoun, said "people are really appreciating the option to be outdoors" watching movies with family.

Flanagan said he has heard from many people in their mid-50s and older who remember the fun of attending drive-ins decades ago.

"People love it," he said.

The county recently extended Alamo's and One Loudoun's permit to keep those outdoor movies running through the end of April. From now until at least then, movies will be shown on the screen daily, wind permitting; the screen can withstand winds of up to 24 mph.

"The county has been super supportive," Flanagan said.

The Loudoun County Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services also hosted three drive-in movies at Bolen A. Park near Leesburg in July. For each of those showings, 70 cars pulled up, many full of passengers.

Half of Loudoun's Theaters Remain Closed

Loudouners are fortunate to have three movie theaters to visit amid the pandemic. Still, pre-COVID, they had six to choose from.

According to the Regal website, all of its theaters suspended operations Oct. 9 "in response to an increasingly challenging theatrical landscape and sustained key market closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic."

The company stated it will continue monitoring the situation and will publicize its plans to resume operations "at the appropriate time, when key markets have more concrete guidance on their reopening status, and in turn, studios are able to bring their pipeline of major releases back to the big screen."

Those closures no doubt are a big blow to the company, especially to its Brambleton location, which in December 2019 installed a 4DX and ScreenX theater, which enhances

on-screen visuals and includes motion-synchronized seats and other effects like wind, fog, rain, lightning, snow, vibration and scents. Regal at the time also announced it was upgrading the seating and lobby in the Brambleton theater.

Typically, Regal, a subsidiary of the Cineworld Group, operates 549 theaters—equating to 7,211 screens—in 42 states, Washington, DC, Guam, American Samoa and Saipan.

Streaming from Home Becoming a New Trend

As many Loudouners have recently made the venture back into the theater, even more continue streaming newly released movies in their living rooms.

According to WarnerMedia, only 39% of U.S. movie theaters are open amid the pandemic and only half of the available seating in those theaters is available for ticket sales. Meanwhile, the internet inside the homes of millions of Americans hasn't skipped a beat.

When WarnerMedia's "Wonder Woman 1984" premiered in theaters on Christmas Day, it also premiered on HBO Max. On Dec. 27, the entertainment conglomerate announced that nearly half of HBO Max's retail subscribers viewed "Wonder Woman 1984" on the day it premiered, in addition to millions of wholesale subscribers who have access to the platform through cable, wireless and other services. The total viewing hours on HBO Max on Christmas Day also more than tripled in comparison to a typical day in November.

WarnerMedia has announced that it will release multiple movies in 2021 on HBO Max concurrent with their theatrical releases. "Wonder Woman 1984" is available for streaming on HBO Max through Jan. 25.

Despite that, and other similar recent announcements, Ezquerro said he is optimistic for the movie theater industry.

"Just because you're streaming movies doesn't mean you will never go back to the theater," he said.

Flanagan said he's not too concerned about streaming putting theaters out of business, either, since production studios make most of their money off the portion of movie ticket sales they receive.

Moving deeper into 2021 and beyond, Flanagan said he expects operations to remain quiet through March. But, he's expecting a bit of normalcy to return by April, once more people are vaccinated and, hopefully, the governor relaxes some restrictions on businesses.

"You will be able to tell a noticeable difference in April," he said. "We're excited about 2021." ■

LoudounNow

VOL. 6, NO. 14

We've got you covered. In the mail weekly. Online always at LoudounNow.com

MARCH 4, 2021



Patrick Szabo/Loudoun Now

Ashburn-based Physical Therapist Tim Zelch works with a patient in a socially distant, masked- and shielded-up workspace. Patient visits at his office were down in spring 2020, but have since returned to normal.

Supervisors Pass Public Building Gun Ban

BY RENSS GREENE
rgreene@loudounnow.com

Loudoun supervisors late Tuesday night adopted a new ordinance banning guns in county buildings, offices and parks, directing the staff to set up screening stations at the Government Center and Shenandoah Building in Leesburg, and the Sterling Service Center on Ridgeway Circle.

The new ordinance also provides exemptions for concealed carry permit holders visiting county parks, as well for private security personnel hired for a county-permitted event, active duty military personnel performing their official duties, historical reenactments and others. It passed on a party line vote, 6-3.

The vote also came after attempts to push the law in both directions—both tightening it by doing without the exception for concealed carry permits, and, with it clear that some sort of ordinance would pass, loosening it by only applying it to buildings with screening stations.

Supervisor Juli E. Briskman (D-Algonkian) led the push for the tighter rules, which failed on a 4-5 vote. She was joined by Vice Chairman Koran T. Saines (D-Sterling) and Supervisors Michael R. Turner (D-Ashburn) and Sylvia R. Glass (D-Broad Run).

“We accepted the support of the gun safety advocacy groups and the voters put us here because they want us to enact such legislation,” Briskman said. “When given

COVID Changes Patient Visits

BY PATRICK SZABO
pszabo@loudounnow.com

A year ago next week, the lives of residents and the fortunes of businesses were shaken by the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic and Gov. Ralph Northam’s emergency declaration that closed schools and limited public gatherings. At the time, surgeons stopped performing non-emergency surgeries, doctors amended their of-

fice procedures and many patients in need of medical treatment forwent visits to the emergency room and the doctor’s office.

Nearly a year later, doctors and dentists are reporting a rebound of sorts, but say many of the procedures put in place to prevent the spread of the coronavirus will be here to stay—ensuring that medical spaces remain among the safest locations in the community.

Tim Zelch, who has operated his Spine and Orthopedic Solutions physical therapy

office in a second-story space in Ashburn’s Premier Plaza since 2019, said the volume of patient visits last spring dropped by 70% at the outset of the pandemic.

Zelch said that overnight drop in patient visits led to a rapid increase by July. He attributed that increase to the nature of his profession; patients who stopped going to their physical therapy sessions or who were unable to get surgery during the height of

COVID CARE continues on page 34

GUN BAN continues on page 35

Postal Customer
ECRWSS



PROPANE COSTS TOO MUCH!
Now is the Ideal Time to Make the Switch

Less • Local • Honest

Hunt Country Propane 540-687-3608 | huntcountrypropane.com

COVID care

continued from page 1

the COVID-19 outbreak were aching to go back to therapy for pain relief.

StoneSprings Hospital Center CEO Nathan Vooyo said the hospital stopped offering non-emergent surgeries, such as knee replacements, for three weeks in late-March and early-April 2020. He said the only surgeries being performed were for emergency situations necessary to save lives, protect limbs and relieve major pain. Babies were also still delivered during that time.

Inova Chief Medical Officer Christopher Chiantella said Inova also halted non-emergency surgeries around that time.

Aside from a shift in the scheduling of surgeries, Zelch said he's aware of another reason for the uptick in patient visits he saw last July: a change in peoples' work habits. As more people began working from home, many were doing so from bed or the living room couch, neither of which are conducive of proper posture.

"I think we saw a big jump in volume because of that," he said.

Zelch now sees more patients than he did at the beginning of 2020.

"By July it was like it never happened," he said about the pandemic's effects on his office.

On the first floor of Zelch's building is Dr. Fuad Alykhan, who has operated the Loudoun Walk In Medical Center there since 2010. Alykhan said he saw a 50-75% drop in patient visits last spring. Like Zelch, Alykhan saw patients begin returning by the summer. But it didn't last.

He said the number of patients he's seeing now is at the same level it was when he opened 11 years ago, still down by about 50% over the level it was in early 2020.

"It's pretty concerning," Alykhan said.

Vogtle Ninh opened Dental 32 Fresh Smiles in Ashbrook Commons Plaza in March 2020. Because he opened his practice at the beginning of the pandemic, Ninh never saw a real drop in patient visits, but did note that "people were terrified" to come into the dentist. He said some patients with tooth issues have been waiting longer to come in than they should.

"They know that have problem and they know they need help and they're putting it off," he said.

At Inova, daily patient visits to the ER were halved by March 29 last year, down from 9,000 to 4,500. Inova Loudoun Hospital Chief Nursing Officer Marissa Ja-

marik said ER visits were back up to 5,000 by April, then into the 6,000s by July but are now back down by 15-20% over numbers seen at the beginning of 2020.

At StoneSprings, Vooyo said, "it's hard to remember what life was like" before the pandemic led to the heightened cleaning and protective measures doctors, nurses and patients have become so accustomed to by now.

"Absolutely there was a drop," he said of patient visits to the ER, noting that those visits are still "significantly down."

But Vooyo attributed the decline in emergency room visits not only to people opting to deal with their injuries and pain rather than risk infection of COVID-19, but also to a shift in lifestyles. He noted that there are fewer people injured in traffic accidents because more people are working from home and there are fewer cars on the roads. He also pointed out that there are fewer sports injuries because fewer people are playing sports.

Jamarik said telemedicine appointments have also kept more people out of the ER in the past year. Because patients are more frequently opting for the convenience of visiting with their doctors over the web, they're perhaps more willing to talk with a doctor about their conditions and are thus avoiding emergency situations down the line.

Many COVID Protocols Are Here to Stay

At the outset of the COVID outbreak, many medical professionals were forced to change their safety measures, and amend their business models.

Zelch furloughed his front-desk receptionist and second full-time therapist and began wearing a face mask, a face shield and gloves. He also got rid of the magazines he had in the front waiting area, removed chairs and spaced out scheduling to keep the numbers of patients in the office at one time to a minimum.

He has since been able to bring his receptionist and second therapist back on board, and has even hired another part-time therapist. All of them have already received the full dose of the COVID vaccination.

Zelch's team also continues to make it a point to show patients that the office is sanitary and safe against COVID-19, since some patients still call to ask about the cleaning regimen and scheduling. He said he uses 10 times the amount of cleaner he used to use and plans to tear down a wall in the office to allow for greater social distancing.

Alykhan transitioned his practice from

It's best to "stick to the basics" when it comes to preventing the spread of COVID-19.

— Christopher Chiantella
Inova Chief Medical Officer

a walk-in office to appointment-based, in part to keep patients from sitting together in the waiting room. Because of the initial shortage of personal protective equipment, Alykhan's team early last year had to practice a little ingenuity, by using plastic tablecloths and shower caps as protective equipment.

On the dentistry end of the medical world, not much needed change to protect against COVID-19, since dentistry equipment has always been designed to protect against all types of diseases. Ninh said he installed an air filter and started wearing a face shield, but continued to practice the safety measures he and other dentists always have, such as wearing a mask and protective eyewear and cleaning instruments frequently.

"COVID is just one of the many diseases we as practitioners try to fight," Ninh said.

At the hospital, the Inova staff activated a surge plan that saw medical teams transform 37 beds in the west wing of the Lansdowne hospital into negative-pressure, critical-care beds for COVID-19 patients.

"We moved very quickly," Jamarik said.

Chiantella said the Inova medical team also worked to treat and discharge patients who had "minimal need" to be kept in the hospital any longer than necessary and set aside three units for critical care. He said medical professionals also were "lining up to help" amid the pandemic.

"Luckily for us the human resource piece was not a limiting factor," he said.

StoneSprings began limiting visitors, established only two entrances to the hospital and implemented temperature screens and a symptom/travel questionnaire. Everyone in the hospital also began wearing the appropriate PPE, which was inventoried, moved to a secure location and controlled by a "PPE czar."

"There isn't a whole lot that we have unwound," Vooyo said about those proto-

cols. "... Some of these things are here to stay."

And it's because of those new, more self-aware protocols that society in the future, Vooyo said, should be able to limit case numbers of certain illnesses.

For instance, Alykhan and his team plan to always mask up when treating patients suffering from upper respiratory symptoms. Vooyo said it's protocols like those that are keeping cases of respiratory diseases other than COVID-19 "way down."

"When we try to protect ourselves against COVID we're also protecting ourselves against the flu," Vooyo said.

Chiantella said Inova has admitted nobody with the flu as a main diagnosis this season. It's the first time that's ever happened.

Alykhan said he's hopeful COVID-19 will work its way through society as quickly as the Spanish Flu did, having begun in the spring of 1918 and largely subsiding by the summer of 1919, albeit only after infecting one-third of the world's population and killing about 50 million people worldwide.

"I think that's the pretense that we're working with," he said.

Overall, the new safety protocols, along with recent vaccinations, have helped to curb the cases of COVID-19 and symptoms thereof.

Vooyo said the number of daily COVID-positive cases StoneSprings doctors have treated was around five each day in November and closer to 10 in December. Now, Vooyo said, the numbers are in the low single digits, if not zero on any given day.

At Inova, Jamarik said the number of patients coming in with COVID-related symptoms, or testing positive for the virus, is down by more than 50% compared with January, the deadliest time of the pandemic since the outset in spring 2020.

Chiantella said that while he's not hearing about patients being scared to visit the hospital as much anymore, he emphasized that the hospital "still remains one of the safest places" to be amid the pandemic.

He said Inova would continue to heed the advice of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and not proceed toward a state of normalcy any faster or slower than what's recommended.

"Inova will just continue to follow what those guidelines are," he said, noting that it's best to "stick to the basics" when it comes to preventing the spread of COVID-19. ■

LoudounNow

VOL. 6, NO. 18

We've got you covered. In the mail weekly. Online always at LoudounNow.com

APRIL 1, 2021

Air Filters and Outdoor Dining: COVID Changing Building Design

BY PATRICK SZABO
pszabo@loudounnow.com

Parched students stopping off at the water fountain for a quick sip before class, patrons scooping their own food at the buffet, and bathroom users touching faucet and door handles are—or were—just a few everyday sights that could soon seem archaic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led people to distance themselves from others and avoid contact with surfaces, among other habits. Many businesses have also upped their cleaning schedules. Those changed perspectives could lead to a change in the ways buildings are constructed in the future. And while the push for those changes could take years to be codified in building codes, some organizations have already taken steps to modify their existing building layouts and to forge new designs to accommodate a more virus-aware world.

Thomas O'Neil, of Leesburg-based O'Neil Architects, said there are some design characteristics that are already catching on as a matter of societal preference, such as multi-use spaces that can function as indoor or outdoor areas. O'Neil said that design feature is popular among wineries, with many installing roll-up doors to open their tasting rooms to the outdoors when temperatures warm up.

Some food and beverage establishments also are veering away from the open-bar concept. O'Neil said he's working with a winery that decided against having a second tasting bar installed, opting instead for space for table service to keep guests separated better.

"That's just a change in design ap-



Patrick Szabo/Loudoun Now

Climatic Heating & Cooling President Sonny Swann replaces a filter in a residential Carrier Infinity Air Purifier, which cleans the air by capturing virus particles and deactivating them using an electric charge.

proach," O'Neil said.

Meanwhile, Old Ox Brewery CFO Graham Burns said his brewery, which operates locations in Ashburn and Middleburg, was halfway prepared for the change in society's mindset about water fountains—Old Ox's Middleburg location never had water fountains. Instead, the bartenders have always provided guests with water from behind the bar. Burns said when the pandemic hit, the Old Ox Ashburn covered its

water fountains and shifted to bartenders supplying water.

Rethinking Building Designs

But for businesses thinking of changing the way their new buildings are designed, there is a price tag. For example, if they plan for more space to allow for social distancing, it can cost them extra to not only

COVID DESIGN continues on page 31

Supervisors to Cut Tax Rate

BY RENSS GREENE
rgreene@loudounnow.com

Loudoun County is headed for the first real estate tax rate below \$1 since 2008 after the Board of Supervisors last week wrapped up budget talks that included a federal funding windfall, cutbacks on the school spending request and a closing decision to approve almost everything requested by county department heads.

After their final mark-up work session March 24, the county is set for a real estate tax rate of \$0.98 per \$100 of assessed value, a 5.5-cent cut from today's rate of \$1.035. That rate cut was largely made possible by cutting the increase in local tax funding requested by the School Board and the receipt of more than \$15 million in additional state funding for the schools.

It was also the result of a particularly winding road from early, dire COVID-era revenue projections which improved over time, tens of millions of dollars cut from the school budget request, and a fight between elected officials that stretches almost to Commonwealth's Attorney Buta Biberaj's earliest days on the job.

School Request Cut by \$29M

Although the school system's budget request came in under the guidance provided by county administration last year, the system still saw cuts as supervisors saw

BUDGET continues on page 30

Postal Customer
ECRWSS





HARTLEY
HOME EXTERIORS
ROOFING • WINDOWS • SIDING

540-441-7649
HartleyHomeExteriors.com

Girl Scout cookies are sold door to door... not the roof on your house.

Trust a **LOCAL** Roofing Professional, not someone that knocks on your door.

The Best Choice for Roofing Replacement



COVID design

continued from page 1

construct that added space, but also to heat it and cool it.

“It’s a huge domino effect,” said Peter Edivan, an independent Loudoun-based architect who designed the Ashburn Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department’s firehouse in 2014.

O’Neil said that while social distancing was the simplest way to control the spread of COVID-19 in the past year, it’s most likely not a long-term solution that will be applied to future building designs.

“Why? It’s a lot of wasted space,” he said.

Instead, O’Neil said perhaps the simplest design characteristic to include in new architectural drawings is improved ventilation systems—systems that could pull air up through a filter rather than across the room past individuals who could be spreading germs, and systems that could bring in outside air.

O’Neil said those modifications in new buildings would be a fairly easy way to ensure COVID-19, or any other virus, is kept at bay without needing to add extra space or other over-the-top design features that could become outdated in the decades to come.

“It’s always difficult to go back and retrofit old buildings,” he said.

But according to Climatic Heating & Cooling President Sonny Swann, an air filtration system that sucks air up rather than across a space might not properly condition a room. He said while it’s important to take sanitization into account amid the pandemic, it’s equally important to consider comfort.

Swann said he’s hearing more of a desire

from some essential businesses, like child-care centers, to incorporate ventilation systems using 100% outside air. But, he said, those systems can be difficult to manage in the summer months when it takes more energy to cool the outside air for indoor use.

In general, Swann is seeing a desire for all kinds of add-on components to air systems, such as photocatalytic air scrubbers that use UV light to clean the air. Climatic has already installed those in all three Ford’s Fish Shack locations and in The Hill School in Middleburg. Swann said those add-ons aren’t overly expensive, either, coming in at about \$1,000 for installation and \$400 for a new cartridge each year.

Edivan said that instead of designing buildings radically different based on the pandemic’s immediate effects, it’s more feasible for organizations to continue having new buildings designed in the same ways as before, but to leave the option open to simply reconfigure the interior space as needed and re-evaluate needs later on. Edivan said it’s all about flexibility, pointing to the ways certain businesses have eliminated their self-serve components.

New Designs Already Catching On

Wegmans, which was one of the stores that eliminated its self-serve stations and also added social distancing queues and transparent dividers around service counters. Wegmans also added a space for Meals 2GO where customers may order restaurant meals for curbside pick-up or delivery.

Meanwhile, Rounds VanDuzer Architects Principal Steve Kenney said his firm has been tasked with designing walk-up windows on some projects to eliminate the need for customers to enter stores to pick up their purchases, like coffee.

Hillsborough Vineyards Master Brew-

er Tolga Baki said the winery performed a “tremendous” number of changes to accommodate an extended COVID mindset and future expected public behavior during flu seasons.

That work included updates to the winery’s two bar areas to better serve customers and to aid in better sanitation; the addition of a new, full outside bar; the addition of more picnic tables; the expansion of the stone patio to double outside seating capacity; the addition of 25 more parking spaces and a gravel overflow lot to accommodate 40 additional cars; and the addition of an enclosed pavilion to hold up to 30 people.

Baki said all those changes will be in place before Mother’s Day.

As for the county government, it has spent about \$1 million on building modifications to protect against COVID-19, according to Loudoun County Public Affairs and Communications Officer Glen Barbour.

For the remainder of the fiscal year, which ends June 30, the county has set aside about \$100,000 to address additional modifications as they come up.

A Return to Normal

Edivan said he’s hearing from many industry leaders that they expect business to return to normal once the pandemic is controlled.

Burns said he’s seeing more Old Ox Brewery guests becoming more comfortable going back inside the tasting room to enjoy their beer, rather than being outdoors in the open air.

“I don’t know what it will be like six months from now, but I think it’s going to be better than what’s it is now,” he said.

But many people will still want to eat and drink outdoors as much as possible. And that desire is duly noted food and beverage operators; Kenney said his firm has seen more of a demand recently for outdoor dining options.

“It was a desire before, but more of a requirement now,” he said.

Delirium Café and Wild Wood Pizza owner Curtis Allred said he, too, feels the culture has shifted to a point where outdoor seating is a must.

“I don’t think anybody opens another restaurant without a patio,” he said. ■

Obituaries

SHIRLEY LEE HAMILTON MCGOWAN DULEY



Shirley Lee Hamilton McGowan Haynes Duley passed away peacefully at her home in Leesburg, Va., on April 3, 2020, after a bravely fought battle with cancer.

Shirley was lovingly known as Mom, Nannie, Grandma and friend. All who met her immediately grew fond of her. That fondness quickly grew into love. She played an important part in all lives by providing a nurturing environment and showering each with love. She attended many significant events including birthdays, graduations, weddings and baby showers. She was dearly loved by her [adopted] grandchildren and great grandchildren and will be missed by all.

Her passion in life was to always help others and to remain positive. Her motto was “Don’t Worry, Be Happy.” If anyone was in need, she was always there to lend a hand.

Shirley began her career by working for the federal government and then transitioned into the commercial industry, working for G&H printing for more than 30 years. She remained in the workforce until she retired at age 77.

She was a lifetime member of the Moose Club in Brunswick, Md., and then transferred to Virginia where she enjoyed many celebrations alongside her good friends.

The months preceding her passing, she was assisted by valued health care providers and volunteers who worked tirelessly to ensure her wish to remain at home with family, friends and loved ones. Many others played a considerable part in providing her comfort, care and friendship.

Shirley is survived by many nieces and nephews, a sister-in-law, Barbara Hamilton, and—because of her love—many adopted family members to include sons, daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She is preceded in death by her mother and father, Lillian Millicent Baker and Charles Wilbur Hamilton; six brothers: Roy, Eddie, Charles, Bruce, Kenneth, and James Hamilton; three sisters: Kathleen Costello, Dorothy McGaha, and Virginia Newcomb; two sons: Steven McGowan (1992) and Craig McGowan (2016); and, most recently, her daughter, Brenda Duley (1/14/21).

Shirley and Brenda both enjoyed spending time with family and friends, and will be missed by many. A dual memorial celebration of life will be held for Shirley and Brenda, on Thursday, April 8, 12 noon, at Loudoun Funeral Chapel. Graveside services will be held immediately after at Union Cemetery. In lieu of flowers please send donations to Blue Ridge Hospice (Winchester, Va.) at brhospice.org or Loudoun Volunteer Caregivers (Leesburg, Va.) at lvcaregivers.org. Visit loudounfuneralchapel.com to express your condolences.

Plates of love

continued from page 20

launching last summer, the group has delivered 115 “bakes” of all kinds and is ready to serve more kids through partner agencies. Swanson says that as new volunteers come on board, the chapter is ready to take on additional agency partners and hopes more organizations will reach out so that she and her bakers can help brighten special days for more Loudoun kids.

Swanson says that when she’s baking for Cake4Kids, she often puts two days into each project.

“A lot goes into those cakes,” Swanson said. “Driving away after delivering a cake, it is so worth it: the joy of knowing that I’ve helped a child on their birthday.” ■



Dottie Swanson of Cake4Kids.

For more information, go to cake4kids.org/our-chapters-loudoun. Caseworkers and volunteer bakers can also contact Swanson at dottie@cake4kids.org.

Contributed