



SPORTS: EMMA CARTER, J.T. DIEHL ARE 2021 FALCON ATHLETES OF YEAR  
PAGES 17-18, 22



TIMES STAFF PHOTO/ROBIN EARL

This is Valerie Cyrus's first year growing vegetables in the Remington Garden. Everything is growing well, she said, except the peas.

## Remington residents grow community in 15-foot by 15-foot plots

By Robin Earl  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Every gardener reaps a different harvest from the Remington Community Garden. Some plant tomatoes; some grow Chinese cabbages; and some benefit most from the peace of mind that comes from – literally – getting their hands dirty.

For Valerie Cyrus, the garden is a constant opportunity for learning. This is her first year with her own plot and she discovers something new every day, she said.

Not all her revelations are happy ones. She is not thrilled with her cucumbers, for instance. “Look at them. Why would anyone want to eat them?” The misshapen veg-

etables are not attractive, but she'll save the seeds and plant them next year, hoping for a better-looking harvest.

A little to one side are Cyrus's lemon cucumbers. They are small and yellow, something new she's tried.

Another surprise – asparagus green beans. “They are supposed to taste like asparagus, but I just taste green beans,” she admitted, “and they can grow up to 2 feet long!”

Cyrus is growing six different types of tomatoes. She's never grown beets before, and she's eager to see what color they are. “I got them through a seed swap,” she said.

See REMINGTON, page 4

## Miller Carpets moves to Main Street Warrenton

Ike and Karla Miller move into their ‘dream location’

By Liam Bowman  
PIEDMONT JOURNALISM FOUNDATION

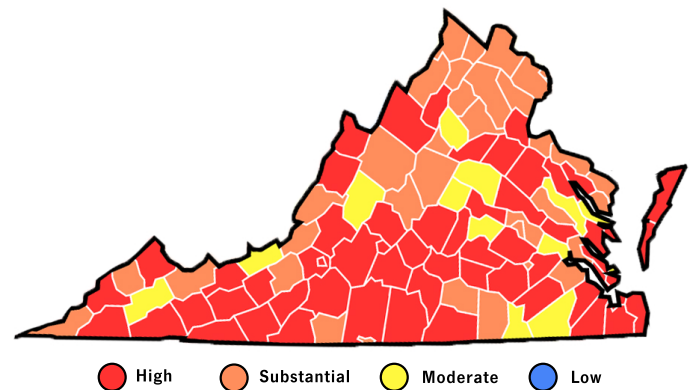
Ever since Ike Miller took over his family business, Miller Carpets, he has dreamed of moving it to 7 Main Street. The historic building, built in 1889 as a post office, had fascinated Miller since childhood. And the visibility afforded by a Main Street storefront, he felt, was hard to beat.



PHOTO BY LIAM BOWMAN/PIEDMONT JOURNALISM FOUNDATION

Ike and Karla Miller at their new “home” on Main Street.

See MILLER, page 5



SOURCE: CDC

## Fauquier's level of COVID-19 transmission rated 'substantial'

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ranks Virginia's localities by level of transmission; Fauquier is currently rated “substantial.”

Community transmission is based on two metrics – the number of new cases per 100,000 in the last seven days and percent positivity.

From July 31 to Aug. 2, Fauquier received a “high” rating. On Aug. 3, though, it was lowered to “substantial.”

On July 27, the CDC issued guidance recommending that fully vaccinated individuals wear masks when indoors in areas with “substantial to high” transmission.

See more COVID-19 news on page 2.



Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources reports hundreds of sick birds in the region. See page 8.



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COURTESY PHOTO

John and Mary Beth Waldeck are among the folks who work to make the Remington Community Garden, the Little Free Pantry and the Little Free Veggie Wagon successful.

## Remington residents grow community in 15-foot by 15-foot plots

REMINGTON, from page 1

Cyrus works in the garden every morning. On days when she's not heading straight to her job as a nurse, she'll bring her dog Dorado along with her, but if it's a workday, she'll wear shorts with her scrub top. "I always get muddy," she grins.

For 30 to 40 minutes every morning, "It's my quiet time," she said. "I love being in the garden."

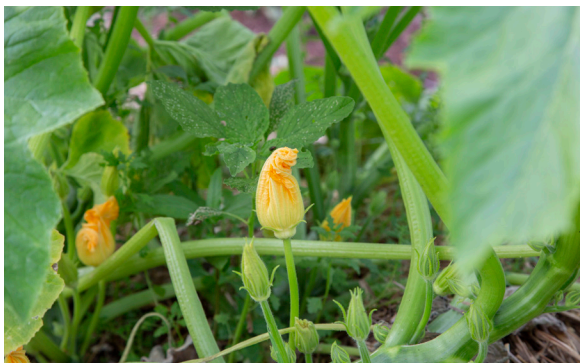
Cyrus said she discovered the garden the same way others have. "I was walking by and saw John Waldeck in the garden, and I asked him about it." Having just moved from Fairfax to Remington, Cyrus didn't need convincing, she said. "I signed up for a plot." Although Cyrus had tried her hand at hay bale gardening before, a 15-foot by 15-foot plot of land was new.

She said Waldeck gave her some potatoes to plant. "I'd never grown potatoes before," she said. Another chance to learn.

Joe Bacher, too, discovered the garden while walking around. He moved from Fairfax two years ago – "where I mowed my lawn with a weed eater" – and during that first summer in town, he walked past the community garden. "I was intrigued," he said and now has a couple of plots.

He grows tomatoes, green beans, potatoes, cantaloupe and squash. He said it's been a good year for potatoes but admits his melons have been hit-or-miss.

He said that although he has to work to keep ahead of the squash bugs and aphids, he hasn't had any issues with rabbits or groundhogs eating



TIMES STAFF PHOTOS/ROBIN EARL

These buds will soon turn into summer squash.

the produce. But if the rabbits find sweet potatoes, he said, it will be a different story, he said. "They'll eat themselves silly on sweet potatoes."

For Bacher, the community garden was like coming home. He always had a big garden while he lived in South Carolina for 30 years. "My first job was as a 5-year-old kid weeding potatoes. Growing up as a farm boy, this was a way to get my fingers back in the dirt," he said.

John Waldeck, who with his wife Mary Beth, has had a hand in developing the Remington Community Garden, the Little Free Pantry and the Little Free Veggie Wagon, as well as the twice-monthly farmers markets, makes it seem like the project came together on its own. "Everyone helps; people donate; it just works," he said.

But the 12-member board of directors for the garden is a hands-on group and it has taken several years to get some of the amenities in place. There is a shed with fertilizer (every gardener gets a key), three spigots for irrigation and even a portable restroom. Remington United Methodist Church is behind the effort – the garden and pavilion are on church property -- and the PATH Foundation donated funding for the covered pavilion. When gardeners suggested they would like a water source, St. Luke's Episcopal Church – next door to the garden -- allowed the group to tap into their water system.

"We have yet to have any major issues anywhere," said Waldeck. "People can come anytime they need to work on their plot. No fences; no problems."

The garden has 35 15-foot by 15-foot plots available; seven of those plots are dedicated to growing produce for the community. Gardeners who have their own plots donate some of their time and expertise to make sure the com-



TIMES STAFF PHOTO/ROBIN EARL

Maddie Mae sang country favorites at a recent Remington Community Garden's farmers market event. Mae has a studio in Remington where she teaches children how to play and sing.

### Next Remington farmers market and concert is scheduled for this Saturday, Aug. 7

**What:** Remington Community Garden farmers market

**When:** Saturday, Aug. 7, 4 to 8 p.m.

**Where:** 180 W. Bowen St., Remington

**Featuring:** Local vendors, entertainment and activities for children

**Headliner:** The Fountains will perform from 6 to 8 p.m. Their music is influenced by rock and folk with some jazz.

**Cost:** Free, but donations accepted to support the Community Garden

munity plot is productive. Currently, the Little Free Veggie Wagon is being filled two to three times a week.

About 50% of those who have plots are really good gardeners, said Waldeck, and another third have "some" experience. The newbies, he said, get lots of advice from the more experienced gardeners. Several of the Remington folks are master gardeners and are happy to share their secrets.

Mary Beth Waldeck said that the Little Free Pantry and the Little Free Veggie Wagon have made a big difference in the community. "At the end of the month, some folks have to decide whether to eat or pay for their medicine. We give them the chance to do both."

See REMINGTON, page 6



John Waldeck is growing this gorgeous Chinese cabbage on his plot of farmland in Remington.

## Remington residents grow community in 15-foot by 15-foot plots

REMINGTON, from page 4

She added, “It works because people want it to work.”

At the beginning of the pandemic she said, “I put the word out that we were going to have to build a bigger pantry. Six hours later, we had \$600. I stick something up on Facebook and it comes.”

Mary Beth Waldeck said that snacks for kids are the first items to go. In addition to non-perishable food, toilet paper, soap and laundry detergent are popular too. She said they’ve been giving away 25 to 30 pounds of pantry items a day.

“It’s for folks who might find themselves just on the edge. The big pantries require people to qualify, but ours is open all the time to anyone who needs it.”

Bacher said he loves the vibe of the garden. “It’s got a great community feel.”

He said he’s seen the quality of the individual gardens improve dramatically. “Since the first year, people have learned a lot,” he said. “It’s a neat opportunity for Remington, providing the chance to meet people in town, work alongside them, share tips and share produce.”

Last summer, Bacher said, there were a couple of extra garden plots and he asked Waldeck if he could plant corn – which requires more room and is difficult to grow and produce. The community garden held a corn roast – with hot dogs – for everyone associated with the garden. Bacher said he’d like to try corn again, but there wasn’t room this year.

He said the community garden provides an evening reset for him. He has always had demanding jobs that require a lot of people-contact. The garden is peaceful for him, he said, because “squash plants don’t talk back.”

James Steele has a double plot in the community garden and said he has grown “every type of vegetable. ... Every year is different. One year is a great year for tomatoes, and the



TIMES STAFF PHOTO/ROBIN EARL  
Violet Summerfield creates her own rock garden.

next year it’s all squash beetles.”

Steele doesn’t live in Remington, but is a Farmers Insurance agent in town. “It’s a good place to get out of the office. I come to the garden and I’m in a different head space. I pull weeds and grow tomatoes.”

Steele said he has limited experience, but has learned a lot from the gardeners around him. “There are so many people with experience. After the first year, you learn what works and what doesn’t. I have learned the same lesson every year – you have to water and weed your garden.”

He said his onions have been killer this year – sweet, white, Walla Walla. “I’d like to try Hawaiian onions,” he said.

Steele said the “community” in the Community Garden is very important to him. “You gotta feed the people and this is a cool way to do it.”

He said that some local students have been getting involved, as well. “We started a lawnmowing program. We show them maintenance of the mowers and mower safety. This year, the kids are bringing their families in too. You teach them something in the morning and they are teaching someone else in the afternoon.”

Steele said that children from 4-years-old through the seventh grade may be seen helping in the garden. Another bonus: “When young kids grow their own vegetables, they are more likely to eat them.”

He said, “Everybody loves the garden. We need more people to know about it and we need more volunteers, to provide either sweat or money. The focus of the garden has always been the community. The fact that there are vegetables is just a bonus.”

Steele said, “So few communities are able to do something like this. But we are a small town. We can do this.”

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TIMES STAFF PHOTO/ROBIN EARL

Bill Polk is Remington’s mayor. Among his other duties, he books the entertainment for farmers market days – the first and third Saturdays of every month.

### Mayor plots progress for Remington

Remington Mayor Bill Polk shares a community garden plot with his friend James Steele. “We’re fishing buddies,” he said. Polk also grows a few tomatoes on his deck at home. “I like being able to grab a couple of tomatoes as I walk by,” he said.

Polk is also in charge of arranging entertainment for the twice-monthly farmers markets held across the street from Remington United Methodist Church. “I try to mix it up – males and females, folk, classic rock, country, blues, jazz, bluegrass ...” he said.

Events are free to all, but donations are collected to support the gatherings and the garden.

Each concert/farmers market has attracted 50 to 75 people this year, he estimates; the crowds are smaller than before the pandemic.

Farmers market vendors number about ten this summer. “It used to be 20.” He said he’s wanted to include some food trucks, but most of them are already booked.

Polk and the other event organizers are looking to recapture the momentum that was building before COVID-19 closed the community gatherings down. A barbecue cook-off is scheduled for Sept. 18. “We’ll have two bands, starting at 2 p.m. There will be ten contestants, so there will be plenty of food to go around, and who doesn’t like barbeque?” He said that the 2019 barbecue cookoff drew 250 visitors to Remington and he is hoping for another good turnout.

### Giving progress a nudge

The mayor said he would like to see Remington become a destination, but that means it needs to offer more places to shop and dine out. Although all the storefronts on Main Street are full, he’d like to expand the town’s options.

There are a couple of properties in town that could host some retail shops, said Polk, and he is testing the waters to see what’s possible. A new pizza restaurant will be opening in a couple of months, and will be serving beer, wine and cocktails. “That will be a first for the town,” said Polk.

He is glad to see a new restaurant and believes other residents feel the

same. Polk remembers a local said to him recently, “I can’t eat at The Corner Deli five nights a week!”

There are high expectations for the new place, though. Polk said, “I’m very fussy about my pizza.”

Polk has another idea to open up the town to new business. He’d like to see golf carts allowed on some town roads. “People commute home and they don’t want to get back in the car to go anywhere, but if they could hop in a golf cart and head downtown or take the family on a picnic to the river ... Parents could take a quick ride to drop their kids off to at school and then stop downtown, that would be good for everyone.”

Polk is in talks with VDOT, he said, to see if the town can lower the speed limit on certain streets and allow the carts. He pointed out, “It’s good for traffic calming, too.”

Polk believes that the new park on the river is going to bring a steady stream of visitors to Remington. The Rappahannock Battlefield Park is scheduled to offer river access for the first time in early 2023. He said that the kayak/canoe launch at the Rector Tract is nearly finished. “It’s not open, but everyone uses it already anyway.”

The Fauquier County Department of Parks and Recreation will hold a ribbon cutting for the launch at noon on Saturday, Aug. 14.

An enthusiastic fisherman, Polk says that he and his wife moved to Remington for its proximity to the Rappahannock. “If I need inspiration, I go to the river,” he said.

The mayor sends out a newsletter every month to share news with residents. This month he’s focusing on the history of the Rappahannock River. He donates his \$100 stipend every month to a good cause and got the idea to ask for a monthly match. The first \$200 donation went to the Friends of the Rappahannock. Steele, an agent for Farmers Insurance, matched Polk’s donation that first month.

Polk believes the park is going to be a game-changer for the town. “Everybody is anxious for it,” he said. Perhaps a canoe rental business would want to set up shop in the town, Polk mused.



COURTESY PHOTO

James Steele has two plots in Remington’s Community Garden. He is a Farmers Insurance agent in town.