

# An Afghan Family

Struggles here, and the family left behind.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
GAZETTE PACKET

**A**hmed and his wife Suraya and their two sons came to the U.S. from Afghanistan in August 2017 on a special immigrant visa program for Afghans who worked for the American government.

"I couldn't go see my parents and had received threats but I didn't take them seriously until my uncle was very brutally murdered when he was shot in the back."

Ahmed and Suraya have both worked for the U.S. government. But their parents and siblings didn't qualify for the program at the time. They are still in Afghanistan and desperate to get out.

"They are in hiding. Everyone in the neighborhood knows we live in the U.S." Ahmed says his parents are retired and not in good health and are barely able to feed themselves. Food prices are high, there is no Western Union, no government salaries. "Everything is down."

"We heard from them yesterday. It was hard for them. They wondered what we are doing to help them get out. They were cry-

## Special Immigrant:

A person who qualifies for a green card (permanent residency) under the special immigrant program. This includes religious workers, broadcasters, Armed Forces members, Iraqi nationals who worked for or on behalf of the U.S. in Iraq and Afghan or Iraq nationals who supported the U.S. Armed Forces as translators.

ing." He says they are running out of money and cannot buy pop up cards anymore to use the internet.

Ahmed says in Afghanistan all fingers and eyes are in the government biometric database. "They have your location, career, health. It's now in the hands of the Taliban and the Pakistani intelligence so they know where each person has worked and for whom they have worked." His wife's father, who was a high level government official, was assassinated by the Taliban when he was on his way to work, and his brother-in-law was recently assassinated. "My relatives are in

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**"My relatives are in serious danger."**

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## "Enough Already"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As my late mother would have suggested after reading four consecutive weeks of Kenny's column being on the same subject: the second degree burns on my feet, I am finally moving on. Though my feet and mobility have not entirely returned to normal, I am nonetheless finished with this arc and am returning to my regular subject: cancer.

After being a cancer patient for so long now, it's easy to forget exactly what the side effects are for a particular medicine that you're presently taking versus one that you used to take. Granted, it's not rocket science, but it is confusing, especially after 12-plus years of treatment and having taken over a dozen different types of chemotherapy, targeted therapy, immunotherapy; most for lung cancer, some for thyroid cancer. Throw in that the patient (yours truly) is over age 65 and likely experienced a touch or two of "chemo brain" (a kind of memory loss brought on by chemotherapy) over the many years of treatment and before you can say alimta, avastin, tarceva and opdivo, you can't even distinguish one from the other. Considering these varying medicines kept you alive for a time, is a bit disconcerting at the least and really scary at the most. However, the bigger picture is that I'm still alive and whatever bumps and bruises I've experienced along the road, I'm still able to drive, if you know what I mean?

Nevertheless, it's important to stay current and aware of the likely side effects because not knowing/recalling them can lead to unnecessary and unhelpful worry: is this the cancer or some predictable side effect? Whatever makes this awareness/lack of awareness challenging is that the side effects vary from one treatment/medicine to the next and are not always consistent in their occurrence and/or intensity.

As an example, currently, I am experiencing shortness of breath. It is a side effect of lenvima, the thyroid cancer drug I'm taking daily. However, I haven't been as short of breath as I am now as I had been the previous few weeks. At least I know it's a side effect so I'm not freaking out. Still, is a side effect that was not happening, problematic, when nothing else (increased dosage) has happened? In fact, I've already had the dosage reduced twice from 24 mg to 10 mg primarily because I was too short of breath, and experienced a touch of dizziness/vertigo as well. The goal in deciding dosage, as I understand it/have been told, is to try and find the "sweet spot" where the minimal dosage results in the maximum benefit: controlled disease/no progression. And now, with my most recent cancer marker down to seven from a high of over 200 last year, the medicine certainly seems to be working. The dilemma is determining how much can the dosage be reduced before it allows the cancer to grow? My oncologist has always been concerned with quality of life so we've regularly adjusted doses depending on the results of lab work and my quarterly scans.

It seems silly to mess with success. And besides shortness of breath - to me, is a minor inconvenience considering the stakes. I just have to be aware and remind myself that a cancer diagnosis, especially one which started with a "13 month to two year" prognosis, is fraught with many challenges and inconsistencies. Sometimes, what's up is down and what's down is up. It's all very disorienting and if my life wasn't at risk, I might find this experience mildly amusing, even curious (as Data from "Star Trek: Next Generation" might say). But, on the contrary, my situation is as serious as a heart attack, which fortunately I've never suffered, thank God! I just hope if it does occur, I'll recognize the symptoms for what they are, rather than as a side effect of the medication I take for my thyroid cancer. What a mistake that would be. And I'd have no one to blame but myself. As a cancer patient, I have one key responsibility: pay attention to my body, and keep my eye on the ball.

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

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## NEWS

# An Afghan Family

FROM PAGE 5

serious danger."

"Since the collapse the Taliban have started searching house to house. They already have intelligence reports so they make an excuse to enter the house such as that they are looking for weapons. Then the Taliban takes the person by force and tells them if the family reports it, they will come back and take your woman and kids. So people are afraid and they cannot publish any news."

He said there are reports they have been giving chemicals to women and putting them alive in coffins to smuggle them over the border. They just say there are Taliban inside. People don't check inside a coffin out of respect. So this is a family member taken."

When Ahmed and his family came to the U.S. they expected to be resettled in Alexandria. "But Alexandria had exceeded their limit of new immigrants so we temporarily moved to stay with some friends in Maryland." But the family found some connections in Alexandria and were told there were lots of work opportunities there.

They were introduced to ALIVE! and Christ Church in Alexandria who helped them through difficult times "as they helped lots of families. The people there always support us." Recently the family moved to Manassas where the cost of living was more affordable. He said they could have more living space and the food and other expenses were not so high as in Alexandria.

Ahmed is highly educated and worked at a high level for several State Department and energy programs. Suraya has a bachelor's degree in business administration and worked for an American program to teach English and computers in private schools.

But when they moved to the United States, Ahmed had to learn how to adjust. He said when you move from a country like Afghanistan to a country like the United States, you have to change your expectations. "You think you should have a high level job or at least not low but you don't have the experi-

ence in the U.S. system, knowledge of the U.S. rules and regulations so you need to start somewhere.

"There is a mental adjustment. You surrender your dreams. You need to compare yourself to the people who surround you and set a new goal. Find your weaknesses and challenges. Start somewhere to support your family. Find a mid-level job and go from there."

He says "I had to say, 'I'm in Alexandria, Virginia. What is the job level and what field of expertise is needed? Maybe the level of education needed for a job is different in the two countries.' You may have to adjust your dreams and imaginations. I talk to my wife and we know we have to have patience. But God is great and he is going to help us."

At this point Ahmed is not where he expected to be in his life. "I dream to be independent and wish I had the life I had back home. But I am on the path to get there. I am happy living in the U.S., and I can't wait to get my citizenship. The only issue is the safety of my parents.

"Afghans are very hard working people. We don't like to sit and wait for other people to help us." He points with pride to his ten-year old son who is a fifth grade talented and gifted student, especially good in math, and his second grade son, also a selected scholar. They recently had another son, born in America.

Ahmed took IT courses and now works remotely for a national company, and Suraya went to dental school and got a job in an Alexandria dental clinic before they moved to Manassas. Now she is raising their three sons.

"Everybody would love to live in prosperity in the country where you were born and grew up but I don't regret the work I did for the U.S. government benefiting people."

He urges, "To save all those members who have sacrificed their whole life to work for Americans— please, please consider the lives left still in Afghanistan."

## BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 11

sign placement, information services, promise flower distribution, cheerleaders, and route monitors. <https://www.volunteeralexandria.org/>

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need.

To learn more, email [info@alnv.org](mailto:info@alnv.org), or visit [www.alnv.org](http://www.alnv.org).

Join Friends' Board. Those who care about mental health, the Alexandria community, and collaborating with fellow residents to make sure the City's most vulnerable residents have a chance to thrive, then consider joining the Board of Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center. The Friends Board is an all-volunteer group of residents that oversees the administration of one of Alexandria's top mental health charities. Friends has no paid staff, so Board members, working on average 10 hours per month, share the day-to-day work needed to accomplish its goals. Interest-

ed candidates should email [FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com).

STEM Professionals Needed. Help assist K-12 STEM teachers as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's STEM Volunteer Program, [stemvolunteers.org](http://stemvolunteers.org), during the 2018-19 school year. In the 2017-18 school year, there are 85 volunteers in 6 Northern Virginia school districts. Contact Don Rea at 571-551-2488, or [donaldrea@aol.com](mailto:donaldrea@aol.com).

Volunteer Adult Mentors Needed. Help assist the Department of Family Services' BeFriend-A-Child mentoring program. The mentors provide opportunities for companionship, guidance and support to children who have been abused and neglected, or who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Contact Ibrahim Khalil ([Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov)) at 703-324-4547.

ALIVE! offers numerous programs that aid low-income families in Alexandria that rely on volunteers: monthly food distributions, furniture, houseware and emergency food deliveries, and community food drives. Individuals, families and groups are encouraged to participate. Students can earn community service hours by participating. Visit [www.alive-inc.org/volunteer.htm](http://www.alive-inc.org/volunteer.htm) or contact the Volunteer Coordinator at [volunteers@alive-inc.org](mailto:volunteers@alive-inc.org).

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PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

A picnic for Afghan families held at Chinquapin Park in Alexandria by Christ Church in Alexandria with Rock Spring UCC in Arlington.



# Outpouring of Local Help for Afghan Refugees

The need is great for volunteers, monetary donations and more.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

**T**housands of Afghan refugees have landed at Dulles Airport in recent days. What next?

The normally systematic process of resettling refugees has been turned on its head by the sudden influx of Afghan Special Immigrant Visa holders who have been evacuated in recent days.

In addition, the deadline for getting refugees out of Kabul has led to desperate efforts by individuals and organizations to assist with the identification of refugees, filling out the paperwork and other mechanics and to assist those in hiding left behind without adequate resources.

“Traditionally we are able to welcome the refugees at the airport, provide a culturally appropriate meal, toys for the kids and housing with furnishing which we have prearranged,” says Jessica Estrada, Director of Newcomer Services for Catholic Charities. Catholic Charities is one of three resettlement agencies in Northern Virginia along with Lutheran Services and Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), which have been designated by the State Department to receive and place the newly arrived families.

“In the current emergency circumstances, instead of getting at least two weeks’ notice so we can prepare for their arrival, things have been changing very rapidly with sometimes a day or two turnaround time,” Estrada says.

Emily Gilkenson, Ethiopian Community Development Council Community Engagement and Communications Officer, adds, “The situation is rapidly changing and



FILE PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE

Daniel Mekibib, Director of the Alexandria Workforce Center

evolving. The current situation has some legal and procedural differences from what the staff are accustomed to and information often comes last minute so it can feel overwhelming.”

In the current situation, a step has been added for the refugees, who are flown to one of several U.S. bases for vetting and filling out documents and then assigned to their location.

The State Department assigns refugees to their U.S. location based on having a relative or friend nearby (a U.S. tie) as well as the area’s ability to provide services. Catholic Charities says they have welcomed 2,600 special immigrant visa holders to northern Virginia in the last six years and resettled 326, most from Afghanistan, this year. They add that as the Afghanistan situation has evolved the number of SIV holders has dramatically increased with about 35 SIV-holders resettled in Alexandria City sent from Fort Lee in August. An SIV holder is a refugee who worked for the American government abroad and whose life could be in danger if he/she remains in his or her own country.

EDCD says that Arlington has been receiving five-to-seven families a week with four-to-10 family members for the last few weeks, “an unusually high volume due to these unprecedented circumstances.” Gilkenson says



Melanie Gray, Director of Outreach and Mission at Christ Church in Alexandria

since October 2020 they have welcomed 330 SIV refugees across their network with the majority of current Afghan refugees placed in the cities of Denver, Arlington, San Diego, Houston and Silver Spring. Each week since the evacuation flights began, they have been assigned a portion of all new SIV refugee cases by the State Department.

Kurt Larrick, Assistant Director Arlington County Department of Human Services says, “Not many refugees are ever resettled in Arlington due to the cost of living. Most refugees in northern Virginia are settled in Manassas and Fredericksburg.” He says if they do resettle any in Arlington “our role would be to work with the resettlement agencies to get them a health screening, get their kids enrolled in school, etc.”

Takis Karantonis, Arlington County Board member says, “We were surprised like everyone else. We have to step up significantly. We did it before with Iraqi refugees.” He adds, “some are really uprooted; we need to make it as easy as possible. We shouldn’t draw the line with who can get in. We have a moral

## How to Help

The local resettlement agencies for the Northern Virginia area are:

### CATHOLIC CHARITIES

<https://www.cdda.net/need-help/immigrants-and-refugees/migration-and-refugee-services/>

### LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES

[https://lssnca.org/take\\_action/afghan-allies.html](https://lssnca.org/take_action/afghan-allies.html)

### ETHIOPIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

<https://www.ecdcus.org/>

### CHRIST CHURCH, ALEXANDRIA,

email [mgray@historicchristchurch.org](mailto:mgray@historicchristchurch.org)

### NOVA FRIENDS OF REFUGEES,

[welcomingrefugees@saintgeorgeschurch.org](mailto:welcomingrefugees@saintgeorgeschurch.org)

obligation. We were running the country. We broke it; we own it.”

Matt de Ferranti, Arlington County Board chair, shared a statement issued on Aug. 25 by twelve mayors and chairs of northern Virginia including information about how citizens of northern Virginia can help with links to the three resettlement agencies operating here.

Justin Wilson, Mayor of Alexandria says, “Since the beginning of the refugee crisis, our DCHS team has been working in partnership with DSS to support the families settling in the City. We have a refugee response protocol that was activated for this effort.” He adds, “I have been blown away by the generosity of so many in the community coming together to support these new residents.”

Daniel Mekibib, Director of the Alexandria Workforce Center says they have received 100 refugees in the last two months, “much more than usual. What we see on TV we haven’t fully felt yet.”

Mekibib says refugees are processed individually, so he expects the number in Alexandria to increase gradually.

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# Crisis in Afghanistan Reverberates Locally

FROM PAGE 4

He adds a challenge is with finding available housing. He says in 2017 they ran out of childcare. "Right now we're ok."

Mekibib coordinates with the other Alexandria agencies to get the refugees what they need such as cash, childcare, housing and to assist in finding employment. He says the immediate goal is to find a survival job to pay the bills, but then more important is to find a job where the person can reach their potential a couple of years from now.

He points to a pilot program "that has been working beyond your imagination." The program is a three-month work-based program where an employer coaches and helps the refugee and pays a full wage during that time. During that period the refugee shows what he can produce and often gets hired into a full-time job.

Mekibib says he was at Dulles airport last Saturday with other local officials processing refugees in the repatriation program. He says they, as well as other northern Virginia social service staff, continue to cover 24-hour schedules at the Emergency Repatriation Center at the airport.

He notes this is not the Dulles Expo Center where the non-US citizen at risk Afghans are temporarily placed.

There are nine resettlement agencies across the country with three serving northern Virginia. The resettlement agencies receive funding from the State Department to provide essential services to the refugees for 30-90 days. This includes housing, food, medical services. They also provide assistance with job opportunities, connecting with state and Federal social services, enrolling children in school and cultural acclimation.

"The goal is to assist refugees to become economically independent and self-sufficient as soon as possible through employment and linkages to service providers." Job development and training are provided for 180 days.

Once the resettlement benefits end, many families are not self-sufficient yet. They have taken whatever low level job they can find while they get training and experience to put them on a path toward self-sufficiency. They might be learning English, taking driving classes, need emergency rent, face health issues and cultural challenges.

Community and faith-based groups often step in to

supplement rent and help provide necessities. Melanie Gray, Director of Outreach and Mission at Christ Church in Alexandria, leads a faith-based group to assist the families with whatever they need from babysitting, to a ride to the dentist, to getting a stroller or winter jacket.

This Christ Church Refugee Ministry began about 5 years ago when Gray realized a lot of people coming to the Christ Church Lazarus Ministry, which assists low-income people, were refugees. A year later the community group, which she had established, had grown to 20 participants and today has more than doubled. They meet weekly by phone to share information, check on the status of families and plan what they can do next to help.

Care teams have been set up assigned to specific refugee families to assist them with daily needs as well as moral and cultural support for families who have lost close family members and are grieving as they face the many challenges in a new country.

At the Aug. 27 meeting Gray announced the good news that the final Christ Church Ministry family in Kabul had made it to Qatar where they are safe. The group resolved to check in and offer a listening ear to new families, offer love and support through providing family/child friendly care packages, and to pool the group's resources to offer financial assistance for families struggling with rent.

Gray points out they have learned it takes the average refugee family an extra five months of rent supplements to become self-sufficient beyond the 90 days provided by the resettlement agencies. Fairlington United Methodist Church volunteered \$3,000 in rent supplement on the spot.

The group also finalized efforts on a letter for government officials to be sent out immediately. "We only have four more days to get the refugees out."

Dale Dwyer from Rock Spring UCC in Arlington created a database of 256 refugees with information on their documentation that are stranded in and around Kabul who need assistance to get out. It accompanied the letter signed by the local faith leaders with the urgent message to assist these refugees with their requests for help.

Betsy Joslyn, a member of Christ Church, shared that she is organizing medical care for refugees on a hoped-for flight from Kabul to Kampala, Uganda, a safe haven. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day

SEE CRISIS, PAGE 9



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# Arlington

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LUIS GONZALEZ

## Plea for Refugee Assistance

Donate to help refugees and their families who are still in Afghanistan.

By SHIRLEY RUHE  
THE GAZETTE

**M**elanie Gray, Director of Outreach and Mission for Christ Church Alexandria, sent out an appeal on Friday, Oct. 15. Gray is the coordinator of a Refugee Ministry, composed of a group of community faith-based organizations. They have been working together to assist refugee families with everything from rental assistance to food, companionship and advice with navigating the daily challenges of American life. The current focus is to provide financial assistance so that the families who have been fortunate enough to come to America can help those members of their families left behind.

Parvez Kakar and his family was able to come to America in 2017 on a special visa program for Afghans who had worked for the American government. But he says his siblings and parents are still in Afghanistan and unable to find a way out. He said he was just able to get \$200 sent to them but “that is like nothing. People ask me how they are surviving. They used to have meat, chicken, a healthy diet. Now they don’t have these things — just bread, tea, sugar. And there are no jobs to support them.”

Parvez says his cousin was able to get to America with his pregnant wife and two-year-old son and was sent to Quantico to be processed. But a few days ago after the vetting process was completed his cousin decided to depart the base because his cousin and wife they don’t speak fluent English. They were afraid the International Organization for Migrants would send them to a far away state where they would be by themselves and life would be difficult for them.

So he is temporarily living with Kakar and his wife and three sons. “My cousin’s wife couldn’t be seen by a doctor the last 2-3 months so this was very important.” But now that his cousin is here, they are finding difficulty getting the attention of a resettlement agency to provide the traditional housing, food, employment assistance and language training for incoming refugees. Kakar says despite over 100 emails and phone calls, he has not been successful in reaching Catholic Charities or the Lutheran Social Services which are designated by the American government as the

official resettlement agencies.

“My cousin and his wife need support to start a new life, a place to live and help with jobs and navigating American life. I am spending hours every day contacting organizations to search for support and I have many supportive people helping me. I will not be able to continue to support their family and my own wife and three sons.” Parvez says he has found political support to be useless and has seen the financial generosity toward refugees dry up.

### Letter from Melanie Gray:

Hello friends, as many of you are aware, the people remaining in Afghanistan today are facing extreme threats of violence, hunger, dehydration and death. Our Christ Church Refugee Ministry has 28 active families in Northern Virginia and over 250 family members currently in Afghanistan. Some of these families have been a part of our ministry since its inception in 2016. We have helped them establish their lives here and many consider us their American family. Many of your faith communities have hosted our community dinners and participated in our efforts in various ways through the years.

Today, our families are begging for our help. The greatest help we can give right now is to offer financial support that would enable them to send funds home that will potentially save their family members lives. Our families in our Refugee Ministry have family members who are trapped in Afghanistan. We are getting updates daily, stories of sisters being sold to the Taliban as brides, photos of family members who have been beaten, one man was shot with a bullet through his throat, another 5 year old boy had part of his arm blown off, people going from safe house to safe house, a family making it to Pakistan only to find out the Taliban is an even greater threat there. The economy in Afghanistan has collapsed and the cost of inflation has made basic needs unattainable. Their ability to survive depends on food, water, safe shelter and the ability to travel if a way to leave Afghanistan presents itself. As of yesterday the amount that can be transferred from Western Union or MoneyGram went from \$200 per week to \$5,000. We will not give up hope as we stand beside these families.

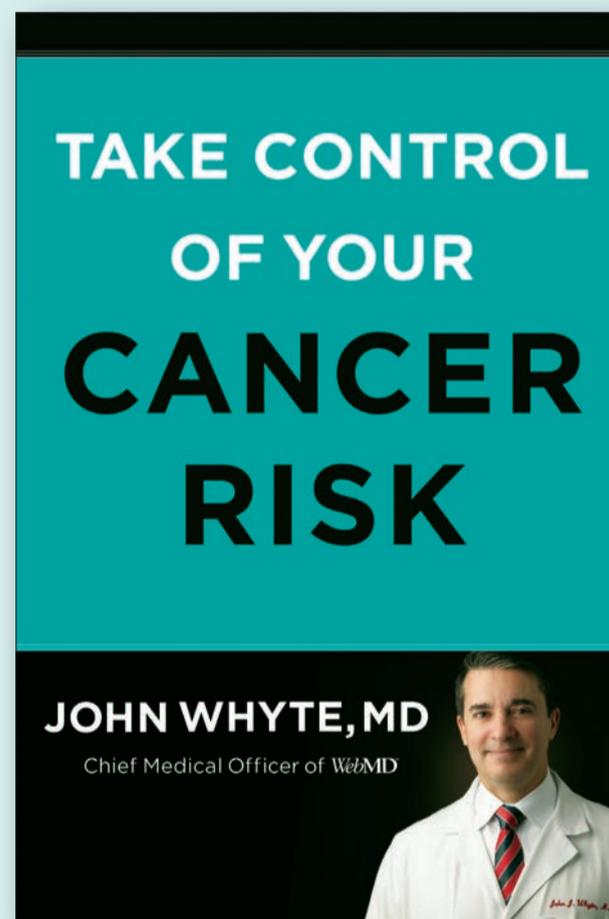
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## Hardly the Same Thing



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

It may not have been the miracle I was hoping for: shrinkage or tumor disappearance, from my most recent diagnostic scans but no growth and/or new metastases is nothing to be taken for granted. However, I did experience a miracle of sorts when the envelope I received at home from the "State of Maryland, Maryland SafeZones Automated Speed Enforcement" authority specifying and picturing yours truly exceeding the speed limit by 12 mph was for information purposes only. It was not an invoice. It was a warning. And the \$40 fine associated with this kind of infraction was left on the cutting room floor. Perhaps this is the extent of the miracle that Solange was able to perform when she prayed for me and my burned feet - and thyroid cancer, on July 20 in the Houston airport. Though this outcome was not exactly the delusional outcome I was hoping for, when we consented to her extremely kind offer to pray for me. Nevertheless, a win is a win. And though a shrinking/disappearing cancer tumor would have been an amazing - albeit unlikely outcome, the tumors remained "stable" and I saved a \$40 outlay. On balance, not a bad day's work.

For which I am extremely grateful. Soon after I entered the cancer-patient world, I learned that any not-automatically-bad news - whether internally or externally to that world, should be acknowledged and appreciated. Any port in a storm you might say. Moreover, I always sought to find the positive in this sea of negativity. Whatever I could see - through any rose-colored glasses I could find, served its purpose to emotionally support me for the many long and lonely nights that followed. Certainly, there's family and friends to help share the burden brought on by a "terminal" diagnosis, but at the end of the day, literally, it's sort of you and your thoughts. Finding a way to navigate this minefield of unpredictable results and anxiety is paramount. On the one hand, you can't take what the doctors and radiologists say as seriously as a cancer diagnosis obviously is, but neither can you pretend that you're not in the fight of your life. That being said, one must be open to new ideas and unexpected offers. Filtering and interpreting whether any of the suggestions made by your doctors and/or your well-meaning friends and family becomes your lot in life. And it's an awful lot at that.

Still, a cancer diagnosis is not nearly the death sentence as it used to be for the previous generation. Though it would be naive to characterize a cancer diagnosis as an opportunity, nevertheless unceasing research in a variety of hospital/cancer centers, medical schools, clinical trials, pharmaceutical companies and the like have led to an evolution in the treatment in cancer, particularly non small cell lung cancer which is the type of cancer I was originally diagnosed with in late Feb., 2009. (Though I am now being treated for papillary thyroid cancer as you regular readers know. As to whether I ever had lung cancer, the jury is still out, not literally.)

And since I have an incurable form of thyroid cancer, as written about numerous times in this space, I am forever open to new experiences that might create a path forward for me. The underlying problem in my situation is the odd circumstances that ultimately led to my more recent diagnosis. Since I had years of heavy-duty chemotherapy while treating my presumptive lung cancer, I have suffered kidney damage which only manifests itself in lab work and in what medications/treatment I can be given. As such when I went to the hospital after my thyroidectomy for post-surgical eradication of the remaining thyroid cancer that the surgeon was unable to remove, the dose of nuclear isotopes I was given was only one-third the dose it should have been had I not been so previously chemotherapy-damaged. As a result, I'm sort of stuck. I have a usually curable type of thyroid cancer which is now considered incurable. The solution? I need to find a clinical trial for patients who have been treated for lung cancer for nine years, perhaps mistakenly, suffered irreparable kidney damage from those years of toxicity, who now has been diagnosed with thyroid cancer and who is now unable to process the medicine likely to cure him and thus is: incurable.

You bet I need a miracle, and sooner rather than later. Maybe I should fly back to Houston.

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

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## SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION

# Meet the Candidates

SEE CHRISTOPHER HARRIS FROM PAGE 13

me to support my children when they matriculated through the system. It is my desire to support the planning and implementation of policies and practices that focus on the individualized needs of students, parents, teachers, and support staff.

### Do you support having School Resource Officers in schools? Why or why not?

I believe that police do not belong in schools as there is data that supports their presence has been detrimental to black and brown students.

There is data to show the criminalization of students of color and their practices in the name of safety contribute to the school to prison pipeline. Safety of students will require a multidimensional approach that involves healthy school climates, financial resources, mental health support, engaging leadership, relationship building, and increased student and community control. I am open to a community conversation involving all concerned parties to determine the best way forward prior to any final decisions.

### What is the biggest challenge facing ACPS?

The biggest challenge facing ACPS currently is school climate and ensuring students, parents, and the ACPS workforce have the adequate resources to support academics and socio-emotional needs of each other.

### If elected, what will be your top priority?

My top priority is to learn and govern with integrity. As I progress and evolve in the position, I anticipate my top priorities will change.

### What role/input, if any, do you believe parents should have in decisions such as vaccine mandates, SROs and curriculum?

As a school board member I perceive parents as our partners and believe they should always have input in regard to decisions that will affect their children.

I believe in the safety of vaccinations and want to ensure that our staff, students, and the community are all as healthy as we can be. It is also my belief that vaccinations are a personal choice and that individuals/families should be allowed to make that very personal choice without being mandated.

## Plea for Refugee Assistance

FROM PAGE 13

Our goal is to raise \$39,200 by Oct. 30, 2021. This would provide \$1,400 per family for November rent, thereby enabling them to send funds home.

### Ways to give:

ONLINE: <https://bit.ly/HelpRefugeeFamilies>  
Checks payable to Christ Church, Refugee

Ministry in the memo line, 118 N. Washington Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

Your prayers are needed.  
Please share this with others who may be interested in donating or joining us.  
Onward and Upward,  
Melanie Gray, MSW  
Director of Outreach & Mission, Christ Church Alexandria [mgray@calex.org](mailto:mgray@calex.org)

## BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 3

one of the following Farmers' Markets: Dates available: 10/30, 11/6, Nov TBD.  
Del Ray Farmers' Market: 10/30  
Old Town Farmers' Market: 11/6  
Visit the website: <https://www.alxfss.org/>

### VOLUNTEERS WANTED

ACPS- Help Provide Meals to Children  
Alexandria City Public School (ACPS) will provide two days worth of breakfast and lunch meals with a snack pack free for any enrolled ACPS student on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Friday distribution will include a meal(s) for Saturday. Volunteers will meet at various schools to assist with packing boxes and loading buses with boxed meals. Then, volunteers will ride the bus along to distribute the meals while on site at a few ACPS mobile pop-up locations. Click on each location to sign up: Francis C. Hammond Middle School, TC Williams High School, or Jefferson Houston School. [www.volunteeral-alexandria.org](http://www.volunteeral-alexandria.org)  
Alexandria Dept. of Community and Human Services-  
Volunteer Guardian  
Looking for individuals who can assure the well-being of an incapacitated Alexandrian living in an Assisted Living Facility or Nursing Facility. Volunteer Guardians are appointed by the Court to make decisions for older Alexandria residents who have lost the capacity to understand the consequences of their decisions. The volunteer will visit the resident monthly and follow the person's wishes as much as

possible. [www.volunteeralalexandria.org](http://www.volunteeralalexandria.org)  
Alexandria Families for Safer Streets - Executive Assistant to AFSS Board of Directors  
The agency is seeking an executive assistant to help coordinate a diverse group of tasks necessary to keep us on track and moving forward. Someone with office manager skills would be the ideal candidate. [www.volunteer-alexandria.org](http://www.volunteer-alexandria.org)  
ALIVE! Volunteers are needed to assist with multiple programs relating to their Food Program, ALIVE! House, and Alexandria Eviction Prevention Partnership Program will distribute food at Mobile Pop-ups and Truck to Trunk events, etc. <https://www.volunteeralalexandria.org/ALIVE>  
Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email [info@alnv.org](mailto:info@alnv.org), or visit [www.alnv.org](http://www.alnv.org).  
Volunteer Adult Mentors Needed. Help assist the Department of Family Services' BeFriendA-Child mentoring program. The mentors provide opportunities for companionship, guidance and support to children who have been abused and neglected, or who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Contact Ibrahim Khalil ([Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov)) at 703-324-4547.