

# What Makes Ted Run

It's not all about running for Arlington's 100-Marathon Man.

By ASHLEY SIMPSON  
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Having just crossed the finish line of the Wild Atlantic Way Marathon in Ireland on Sunday, June 12, Ted Hobart has officially run 100 marathons. That's 2,620 miles of both triumph and pain, which the long-time Arlington resident has covered over 18 years.

As he announced on the ManiacFanaticsMadness blog upon finishing the race, "I did it – I completed my 100th marathon today at the Donegal Wild Atlantic Marathon in Killybegs, Ireland."

Marathons have always been about more than just running, accomplishment, and medals for Hobart. He's always run them in tandem with fundraising for a non-profit organization, and to raise awareness for important causes.

"I ran my first marathon in 2004, as part of a charity team raising money for [a now defunct national AIDS non-profit organization]" Hobart said. "And, although this foundation doesn't exist anymore, I've continued running marathons as a member of various fundraising teams and for causes and organizations that mean something to me."

For example, after his first three marathons, he began fundraising – as well as working full-time for – Walker-Whitman Health, a non-profit health organization that focuses on HIV/AIDS healthcare and advocates for the LGBTQ community.

And, representing Whitman-Walker both as an employee and volunteer runner was life-changing for Hobart.

"It was a year after my first marathon that I came out as a gay man," Hobart said, "and I really couldn't have done this as a part of any other charity."

## The Biggest Purpose Behind Hobart's Running

There are a lot of poetic things about Hobart's running journey. Perhaps the most poetic part of his running is the way he devotes all of his races to his fallen friends, Lollie Winans and her girlfriend Julie Williams. The two young women were brutally murdered during a



Ted Hobart in his hotel after completing his 100th marathon, this one in Ireland.

Ted Hobart with the race director at the finish of his 100th marathon, the Donegal Wild Atlantic Marathon in Killybegs, Ireland.

long hiking trip along the Appalachian Trail on June 12, 1996.

And yes, Hobart intentionally completed his 100th marathon on the very day that marked the 26th anniversary of Lollie's and Julie's deaths – the still-unsolved murders were deemed the nation's first federal hate crime.

"It is suspected that Lollie and Julie were killed because they were a lesbian couple," Hobart

he consistently feels that he shares with Lollie.

"Running a marathon is never easy for me – it's always difficult," Hobart said. "But, Lollie – who had become a part of my family almost immediately after meeting her – is always on the back of my mind when I run."

Every year, June 12 is an unavoidably difficult day for Hobart,

but he didn't think twice about planning it as the date of his centennial marathon this year. He was fueled by the idea that, in running a hallmark race on this day, he would bring extra awareness to the still-unsolved double homicide.

Even before this momentous marathon, Hobart had been running in honor of Lollie and Julie for more than a decade.

"The first marathon that I officially did in honor of Lollie in Julie in 2005 – the Vermont City Marathon" Hobart recalled. "[Lollie and Julie had special ties to Vermont], and that's why I did that for them;

it was their memories that brought me to that part of the world to run."

## Hobart's Hurdles en Route to Running for Lollie, Julie, and Himself

Hobart had to clear many hurdles before getting to the point of accepting the tragedy and loss. The hurdles were also there on his way to finding pride and joy in living his own life.

"I met Lollie in 1991 when she had just graduated from Sterling College in Vermont," Hobart said. "She became a part of my family, and was in all my family photos ... Then, in 1995, she and Julie were hiking the Appalachian Trail and were due to visit me in North Carolina – where I was attending Warren College at the time – during their travels."

That year, he was so looking forward to Lollie's visit. However, all the plans he had for the reunion fled from his mind after receiving a chilling phone that he'll never forget.

"This FBI agent kept calling for me, leaving messages on my voicemail," Hobart said. "I found out they were calling everyone in Lollie's address book because she

and Julie had been killed in the Shenandoah Mountains in Virginia. I just couldn't believe this. You read about people getting killed, but you never think it's going to be one of your best friends who dies. It's just one of those moments you're never prepared for – especially not in your twenties. You realize, you're not as immortal or immune to these things as you think you are."

Among all the ways this tragedy affected Hobart, it also prevented him from publicly accepting himself as a gay man – something he said Lollie had helped him find the courage to do.

"Before Lollie's death, I was feeling on top of the world – ready to come out as a gay man and stop having to keep that part of myself from people," Hobart said. "Lollie was someone I could have talked about this with. I was so ready to



The scenic course of the Donegal Wild Atlantic Marathon in Killybegs, Ireland.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

just be open with it all, and then after Lollie died, it all came to a crashing halt. It pushed me so much farther into the closet that I didn't even come out until 2005."

## Not Running from Grief, but Moving Forward One Step at a Time

The first marathon that Hobart ever ran was in 2004 – the Mardis Gras Marathon in New Orleans just eight months after breaking his leg (and about eight years after Lollie and Julie were killed).

"I had to ride the metro everywhere, and I kept seeing this sign on the train about training for your first marathon," he said. "When I told my orthopedic surgeon about it, he looked me up and down like I was crazy. I wanted to prove him wrong."

So, he trained – and ultimately finished the Mardis Gras Marathon as his first of what is now one hundred.

Hobart added that after Lollie's death, he was likely running these

crazy distances as a way to avoid his grief and other inner turmoil.

Then, running became something entirely different – something far more positive – when he ran his first Vermont City Marathon. It was through the training and fundraising processes for this race that he became comfortable and proud publicly identifying as a gay man – as well as a prolific runner. And, although no longer with him physically, Hobart maintains that Lollie still played a role in this personal transformation.

"Running in Lollie and Julie's memory and raising awareness about them and what happened to them was the motivation that kept me going," he said. "I paired with Outright Vermont, an LGBT youth nonprofit in Burlington to raise money for them in that first marathon ... and I ended up doing four Vermont City Marathons. It was after those four that I went to San Francisco, where I found out about this crazy bunch of people who ran marathons in every different state."

And ultimately, Hobart became a proud, happy, and accomplished member of this wonderfully crazy bunch of 50-state marathoners – one reason he had to go to another continent to run his centennial marathon.

## What's Next for Hobart

Hobart is only 55 years old and

has already accomplished more than most people have in a lifetime.

He ran his first marathon at the age of 37 and has no plans to stop tackling them – and sprinting to those finish lines. And, in doing so, he's showing his community – the world, even – that the sky really is the limit when it comes to accomplishing goals, especially in the name of wonderful causes.

"Running a marathon is never easy for me – it's difficult," Hobart said. "I need something to push me through those challenges, and a lot of times it's Lollie and Julie."

"Also, I work in mental health and I'm surrounded by patients who are diagnosed with many different challenging illnesses and other conditions. With all this in mind, I try to remain very calm and focused to persevere and push through and finish that marathon... it's a lot like life in general."

So, how has Hobart learned to successfully complete both a mind-boggling number of marathons and thrive amid the many other things that life has thrown in his direction?

"I've found that if you focus on happy moments instead of what's hurting, then anything is possible," Hobart said. "If you focus on happy moments instead of where you're hurting, you can always put one foot in front of the other."

## "FLOURISHING AFTER 55"

Office of 55+ Programs  
Department of Parks  
and Recreation  
300 N. Park Dr.,  
Arlington, VA 22203  
703-228-4747

Contact: Judy Massabny, [jmasa@arlingtonva.us](mailto:jmasa@arlingtonva.us)  
55+ Programs are in person at 55+ Centers, unless otherwise noted. A 55+ Pass is required to participate (starting at a \$20 annual fee). To join or register, go to [registration.arlingtonva.us](http://registration.arlingtonva.us) or call 703-228-4747.

NVSO: Registration is open for the 2022 Northern Virginia Senior Olympics to be held Sept. 10-24. Check the website, [www.nvso.us](http://www.nvso.us) for full details including events, full schedule, rules and more. Registration fee is \$20 for unlimited events. Participants must be 50 years of age by Dec. 31, 2022 and live in a sponsoring jurisdiction. Registration is online only. For additional information, email Sidney Reid, Arlington's representative on the NVSO Committee at [sreid@arlingtonva.us](mailto:sreid@arlingtonva.us).

Movie night at Lubber Run 55+ Center, "West Side Story" (2021), Thursday, July 14, 6 p.m. Registration # 914804-03.

Ballroom bootcamp, common steps to a different dance each week, Thursday, July 14, 2:30 p.m. Lubber Run 55+ Center. Drop-in.

Movie discussion, "The Imitation Game," on Netflix, Thursday, July 14, 3 p.m. Virtual. Registration # 914402-05.

A caregiver's guide to finances, how to prepare for future care costs and benefits of early planning, Thursday, July 14, 1 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Presented by Dan Cronin, Alzheimer's Association. Registration # 914404-05.

Afternoon piano lounge, relaxing music by pianist Daniel Austin, Friday, July 15, 2 p.m., Aurora Hills 55+ Center. Registration # 914301-07.

Social ballroom dance, spacious dance floor, no instruction, have fun with fellow 55+ members, Friday, July 15, 1:45 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Drop-in.

"A Caregiver's Guide to Medicare," Monday, July 18, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Virtual. To register, email, [MedicareHelp@arlingtonva.us](mailto:MedicareHelp@arlingtonva.us) or call 703-228-1725.

Continuum of care options, Monday, July 18, 1 p.m. Professionals discuss services and answer questions about costs. Virtual. Registration # 914500-18.

Current events, discuss local and world news, informal, volunteer led, Monday, July 18, 10 a.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Registration # 914402-14.

Ukulele class to learn basic strumming, Tuesday, July 19, 4:30

p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Registration # 914304-02.

55+ Travel group to visit the Library of Virginia in Richmond, Tuesday, July 19. Lunch at Carytown, Registration # 902207-05. Cost \$19, Arlington resident, \$22, non-resident.

Container gardens, information offered by Master Gardener, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Tuesday, July 19, 11 a.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Registration # 914401-06.

Smartphone videography, learn all about the video capabilities of a smartphone, Tuesday, July 19, 2 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Meet tech guru Nick Englund. Registration # 914403-09.

Genealogy 101, share information and research tools, Tuesday, July 19, 11:30 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Registration # 914402-08.

Rock music legends, part two of the British Invasion featuring music by The Who and The Animals, Tuesday, July 19, 1:30 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center, registration # 914400-26 or virtual, same time, registration # 914400-27.

Breast cancer prevention, presented in both English and Spanish, Tuesday, July 19, 10 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Presented by Miriam Campos, Virginia Hospital Center's Cancer Research Center. Registration # 914500-16.

55+ Live! Talk Show, new episode, Tuesday, July 19. Visit [youtube.com/virtualprograms](http://youtube.com/virtualprograms).

Harper's magazine articles discussed, Wednesday, July 20, 11 a.m., Aurora Hills 55+ Center. Facilitated by Librarian Vicky McCaffrey. Registration # 914402-18.

Opera appreciation group to hear musical selections from "La Cenerentola" (Cinderella) by Italian composer Gioachino Rossini, Wednesday, July 20, 1:30 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Professional commentary by George Cecchetti. Registration # 914300-04.

Afternoon of acoustic music with Ed Girovasi and Phil Rosen, Wednesday, July 20, 2 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Registration # 914301-03.

Bilingual Bingo, Wednesday, July 20, 10 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Registration # 914600-02.

Movie discussion, "The Tender Bar" (2022), Thursday, July 21, 1 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Registration # 914804-05.

"The Rise of Vladimir Putin," Thursday, July 21, 1:30 p.m., via Zoom at Lubber Run 55+ Center, registration # 914400-14 or virtual, registration #

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## POODLES OF ARLINGTON



PHOTO BY EDEN BROWN/THE CONNECTION

Juno has been a resident of Arlington for almost 6 years. Her eight sons and two daughters live all over the country, but a few still live in Arlington. She cries when she is reunited with anyone in her family — no matter the species. Like any new mother, she had a makeover when the pups were all gone and she could stop nursing them, finally, and getting her figure back, could dress up again.



PHOTO BY EDEN BROWN/THE CONNECTION

Juno's daughter, Strawberry, is allegedly a show dog and keeping her coat clean, debris free, and unmatted, is a high priority ... but not for Strawberry, who, having grown up with eight brothers, is more of a tom boy than a princess.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Dax loves to watch TV, and sits rapt when the instructive dog training program comes on. He never gets tired of hearing "good boy."

# Arlington's Intelligent, Aristocratic, Gorgeous Standards

## 'Peehavioral challenges,' 'Compoorders,' and 'Couch pood-tatoes'

BY EDEN BROWN  
ARLINGTON CONNECTION



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Juno has a listening vocabulary of forty words, and understands French too. She traveled to France and Italy a few years ago. She liked being allowed into the restaurants and thinks foie gras is delicious. When not traveling or taking care of the young ones, she volunteers with Fairfax Pets on Wheels.

Hardy climbs up behind "Dad" when he is working at the table and just sits there, happy to be with him, staring intently at the newspaper just like dad. Eventually, he will suggest going outside to play ball. He and his seven brothers all use their "hands" a lot, in a kind of "hey, notice me," or "you gotta be kidding me!" kind of way.

Ozzie's arrival in the home was so traumatic for the "big sister" that she had to go on to a psychologist to help her adjust to the young upstart who was claiming her parents' affection so suddenly. Now they are best friends.

Picasso follows his "big sister" to the door when she leaves for school in the morning, and mopes until she comes home. Strawberry, whose career as a "show girl" has had its ups and downs, is ever vigilant: if she sees

Hardy, another one of Juno's sons, believes he is a human, and that sitting at the dining room table is normal for poodles. So is studying the computer screen. His owner says: "So far, he hasn't gotten ON the table, so that's good." (Well, of course not. Humans don't get on the table either.)

the comb and brush come out, she runs upstairs and throws herself on the bed in what can only be described as a teenage fit over a bad hair day. If she could slam the door, she would.

Niko likes to play one parent off the other — or distract them by doing something naughty, like poking the fish in the pond. He likes to steal toilet paper; he grabs the roll and runs off with it, leaving a trail of white. He can open and close doors.

And Dax gardens, or helps out in the kitchen, when he is not watching James Herriott or the dog trainer on TV. He was Juno's first-born, and came out singing.

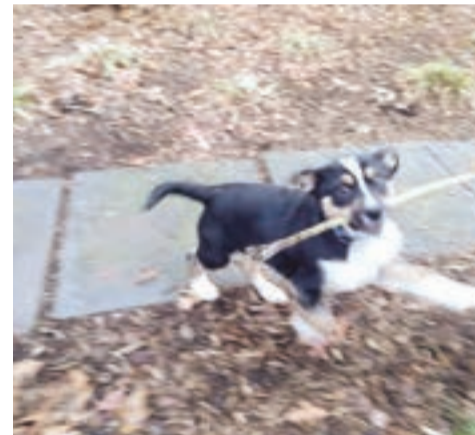
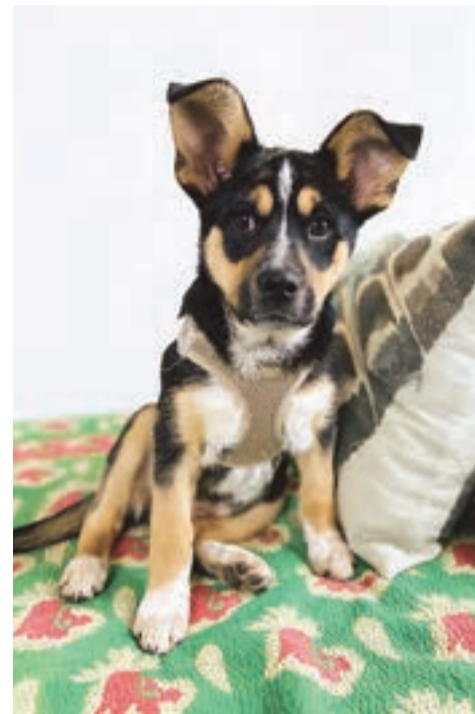
But one thing they all have in common? A serious obsession with squirrels, balls, and the crinkling of the treat bag. It seems these are poodles, not people, after all.



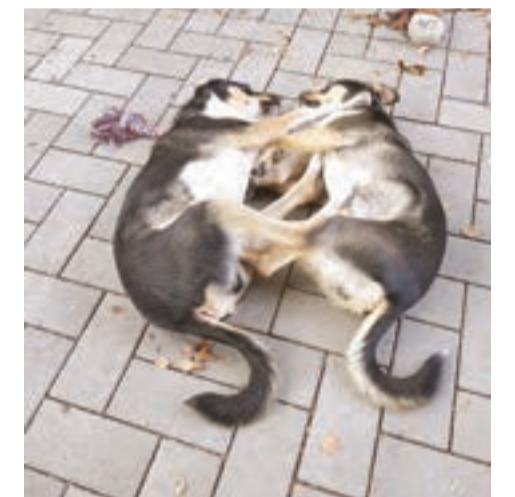
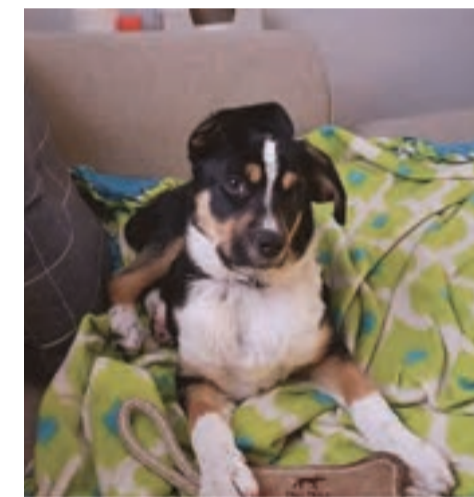
PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Kate Giroux says she keeps working on getting Juno's son, Ozzie, to lift his leg to pee. "Somehow, we have a communication problem. He lifted his right front leg this morning. Wrong leg. The only other time he lifted his correct leg was when he learned that squatting in 8 inches of snow wasn't comfortable. Other than that, he just pees like a girl."

## DOG SIBLINGS



Sibling dogs, Samson and Mishka, move in next door to each other, and bring neighbors together as friends.



# Best of Both Worlds for Dog Siblings Samson and Mishka

BY ASHLEY SIMPSON  
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

It's been said time and again that there is no closer bond than the one shared between dog and owner. Except ... what about the connection that dogs share with their actual siblings?

It's impossible to know for sure, of course. While many dog experts do believe that littermates can recognize one another even if separated and then later reunited, there hasn't yet been a dog with the verbal skills advanced enough to confirm this hypothesis.

Also, keeping littermates together isn't as common as you might think, either. As Chelsea Jones, senior communications specialist for the Arlington Welfare League of Arlington (AWLA) explained, rescue organizations — and even breeders — often purposely avoid placing canine siblings together in adoptive homes because of "littermate syndrome."

"Having littermates in the same home may result in behavioral problems or frustrations on the human end," Jones said. "The two pups often bond together and may have a difficult time being apart, or even bonding with their owners. Training one puppy is a lot of work in itself — training two puppies can be a full-time job!"

Fortunately for dogs and littermates Samson and Mishka, these two have a healthy

balance of having both one another in their lives, as well as living and bonding independently with their respective human families.

In December 2020, the lucky brother and sister dogs were adopted by a pair of next-door neighbors — Alyssa Tope and Galina Ginzburg of Arlington — who have been intentional about keeping the two dogs in each other's lives.

"Whether or not they know they are siblings, they are certainly best friends who immediately recognize each other," Alyssa Tope, Samson's adoptive mother, said. "They recognize each other's barks when they can't see each other, they recognize each other's names, and they have a very intuitive play style together that is different from how they play with other dogs. They even seek each other out when they are at the dog park together."

Tope, Samson's owner, and Galina Ginzburg's next door neighbor, emphasized how perfect the setup is for Samson and Mishka.

"My husband James's parents have dogs who are siblings, and they have been living together since they were puppies," Alyssa said. "The feedback his mom gave us was that training siblings who live together can be difficult. With this setup, we feel like we have the best of both worlds because Samson and Mishka are each independent dogs

in their own homes who have been easily trainable, but they also have the benefit of playing with each other whenever they want."

Now going on two years old, Samson and Mishka were "pandemic puppies" along with their nine other siblings — born in the fall of 2020 in West Virginia to their mixed-breed mother, Sadie.

In November, Sadie and her brood landed in the care of the AWLA team, who ultimately placed all eleven puppies into different foster homes in groups of twos and threes. The two brother and sister puppies who would later become known as Samson and Mishka, respectively, were in the same foster home.

"Since we were all working from home in 2020, my husband, Aaron, and I decided we wanted a dog, but the shelters were (luckily, of course) experiencing dog shortages with so much of the public stepping up to adopt," Galina recalled. "But then, the day after Thanksgiving, one of my friends who happens to be an AWLA foster told me that she'd be fostering three puppies who were a part of that litter of 11 — including a male (Samson) and a female (Mishka)."

When it became real that Galina and Aaron would be bringing home one of these puppies, they couldn't help but share photos and puppy updates with their neighbors (and, at this point, good friends), Alyssa and James.

"We wanted to adopt a dog, too," Alyssa said. "We knew the pandemic was the most ideal time to adopt with all the time we would be able to spend with the dog. Originally, we planned on getting an older dog since they have a harder time getting adopted — and we didn't mind the idea of not having to potty train! But, once we saw the adorable photos of those three puppies in foster care, we knew we had to meet them. And, as everyone knows, once you meet a puppy, you can't not bring him home!"

And so began a multi-dimensionally stronger, more beautiful friendship — both between the humans and the dogs. "Even before we brought the dogs home, we shared information that led us to adopt from the same litter," Galina said. "Little did we know how close the two dogs would be, or how good of friends we would become because of it."

And as siblings of all species often do, Samson and Mishka have different (yet complementary) personalities. They also have periods when they act like typical human siblings, too. "Both puppies are always eager to see each other with lots of zoomies and wrestling," Alyssa said. "Samson is a sweet, playful gentleman and Mishka is a feisty energizer bunny. Still, they are both epic snugglers and love bugs. Samson can act like a protective old-

er brother of Mishka, and they can both get jealous when the other is playing with another dog."

This bond has been — and will continue to be — a major part of Samson and Mishka's lives as well as for the Ginzburgs and Topes.

"The great thing for Samson and Mishka is that they have never had to spend more than a few days apart," Galina said. "Alyssa and I, along with our husbands, have joked that if one of us moves, we would all have to move together."

And perhaps that wouldn't be so bad, either. While it's common to hear about the many blessings that dogs bestow upon their human families, Mishka and Sam have gone above and beyond: they've been the foundation for a beautiful long-term human friendship.

"Galina and I bought houses next to each other in the same month in 2019 and for the most part just had typical friendly neighbor conversations until the pandemic hit," Alyssa said. "Since we adopted during the pandemic, for long batches of time, we really only spent time with each other — while the puppies played. What started as passing hello's based on proximity has blossomed into a strong friendship."

To learn more about other puppies for adoption with the AWLA — including litters of irresistible puppies, visit [www.awla.org](http://www.awla.org).



## On the Horns Of the Deer Dilemma

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On the horns of the deer dilemma, Arlington County orders a more extensive study.

## Old Instruments, New Friends

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On the horns of the deer dilemma, Arlington County orders a more extensive study.



CONNECTION FILE PHOTO

As Arlington studies the problem, some say the deer problem is getting worse.



CONNECTION FILE PHOTO

Arlington will take both the study findings and the community's response into consideration when it comes to deciding next steps.

**“We would hope for a robust community engagement plan that would be inclusive and broad – one that offered humane varied solutions.”**

— Jennifer Toussaint, Chief of Animal Control at the AWLA

All the while, following the survey, the county wasn't quite ready to take any action, nothing that would impact the number of deer in the area, anyway.

#### New Study of Deer in Arlington

This summer, the Department of Parks and Recreation announced that Arlington County would pursue further evaluation of deer in county-owned parks. And in September 2022 – a full year after releasing the results of the April 2021 drone survey – Arlington County officially hired White Buffalo, Inc., a wildlife management and research organization with experience analyzing deer around the region.

The current study is different than the drone survey, though. While the purpose of last year's evaluation was to count the number of deer in specific areas of Arlington, White Buffalo's study is focused on the impact the deer have on the land.

“The drone survey only captured the amount and locations of deer,” Alonso Abugattas, Natural Resources Manager for Arlington County Parks, said. “This second study provides direct observation and measurement of potential deer impacts that couldn't be captured by our initial aerial survey. White Buffalo Inc. will be looking

# On the Horns of the Dilemma

**Is deer management needed?  
What would it entail?**

BY ASHLEY SIMPSON  
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

**W**hite-tailed deer have been a source of concern and contention in Arlington County for quite some time. For more than a year, there has been intense dialogue among different community groups over whether or not the current deer population in Arlington poses a significant ecological problem.

While some residents – like members of the Animal Welfare League of Arlington (AWLA), for example – don't see the numbers of white-tailed deer in the area as an issue, others see droves of deer as a multidimensional threat to the local environment. These people – like members of the Arlington Regional Master Naturalists (ARMN) – argue that the overpopulation of white-

tailed deer results in serious, irreversible damage to Arlington's natural areas.

“As Master Naturalists, our focus is the natural areas,” said Steve Young, Master Naturalist and Arlington Park Steward. “The question isn't whether or not the deer belong here; we understand that they aren't an invasive species. It's about whether or not they are out of balance and are harming natural areas. There are plenty of indicators that there is an overpopulation of deer and it is having negative impacts on the environment, other species, people, and even deer themselves.”

The ARMN is a regional chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists, a non-profit organization made up of rigorously educated and certified “volunteer educators, citizen scientists, and stewards helping to conserve and manage natural resources and public lands in Virginia,” according to the official website for the Virginia Master Naturalists.



# Is Deer Management Needed?

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at the overall deer browse and whether it is ecologically sustainable. They will document species affected by deer browse as well as the height of woody plants and damage to woody plants as an indicator of browse intensity.”

Deer browse occurs when deer feed on the leaves, soft shoots, flowers, new growth, or fruits and seeds of high-growing, generally woody plants such as shrubs and sapling trees.

Abugattas added that White Buffalo will also be looking at other metrics, too, whatever it takes to paint a full picture of white-tailed deer in Arlington County-owned parks.

The White Buffalo team certainly has their work cut out for them. Unlike the contractors behind last year’s drone study, White Buffalo will be conducting research for months.

“They are now compiling field data, interviews, literature review, and regional benchmarking, to draft an initial report,” Abugattas said. “This report will inform the public engagement portion of this project, which should occur during the first quarter of calendar year 2023.”

Then, after getting community feedback, White Buffalo will provide a comprehensive report on Virginia deer for Arlington County.

“Based on what they hear from staff and community, White Buffalo will provide a written report that may include recommended short- and long-term strategies to achieve stewardship goals and ecological carrying capacity in designated natural lands in county parks,” Abugattas said. “Recommendations may differ by location and level of impact.”

Arlington County insists that it will take both White Buffalo’s findings and the community’s response in consideration when it comes to decision-making time.

“Public feedback will be one of many factors that the county will consider when deciding whether to actively manage deer and what management strategy to pursue,” Abugattas said.

And this opportunity for collaboration with the county is exactly what the AWLA and its allies have been hoping for, according to Jennifer Toussaint, Chief of Animal Control at the AWLA.

“My greatest hope is that all of the stakeholders involved are given equal opportunity for input and outreach,” Toussaint said. “Additionally, we would hope for a robust community engagement plan that would be inclusive and broad – one that offered humane varied solutions by neighborhood or region of the county instead of issuing a blanket policy.”

## No Sense of Urgency?

The Arlington Master Naturalist’s position is that the Department of Parks has not acted with the level of urgency that matches the deer crisis.

“The county has never denied anything we’ve said about the damage that deer are causing,” Bill Browning, ARMN Master Nat-



ARLINGTON COUNTY

A buck in Arlington County

**“I love deer, but I also love song birds, snakes, and all these other animals are suffering, dying, and not able to raise their young because their homes are being taken away by deer.”**

— Marion Jordan, Master Naturalist and former Arlington Regional Master Naturalists president

uralist and Arlington Park Steward, said. “To say we are satisfied with the pace of things, no. But it is what it is. The urgency is the issue here. The first contractor, which was done over a year ago, called for an aggressive deer management plan. And here we are in Arlington continuing to study it. We’ve got to show a little more urgency than we are.”

On the other hand, the AWLA, which provides the county’s animal control services, isn’t even convinced that overpopulation exists. The organization appreciates that the county is doing its due diligence before taking any official action to reduce the number of deer in ways AWLA would see as inhumane.

“I greatly appreciate the county’s thorough assessment on all matters, including considerations for if deer are having an impact on natural preservation areas and what concrete steps could be taken to minimize the effects,” Toussaint said. “We support Arlington County adopting a practical, humane, and sustainable deer management plan. As the county’s animal resource center, we will continue to work with anyone in the community to create humane deer management solutions that keep our citizens, ecosystem, and wildlife healthy and safe.”

Unfortunately, though, according to the master naturalists, the longer the county and the Department of Parks waits to take action, the worse the situation gets.

“It’s clear that we don’t share a sense of urgency with Arlington County about addressing this,” Marion Jordan, Master Naturalist and former Arlington Regional Master Naturalists president, said. “The deer are still here, they are still increasing. Everything we talked about after the last survey is still present. The county is going at a very slow pace. While we can’t influence the pace of it, we can say how important it is to keep moving forward to take steps to protect our forests.”

The ARMN team emphasized that they don’t see a problem with white-tailed deer in and of themselves, just when they are out of balance with the environment like they are now.

“We are animal lovers,” Browning said of the ARMN. “I love deer, but I also love song birds, snakes, and all these other animals are suffering, dying, and not able to raise their young because their homes are being taken away by deer. Controlling the deer population is beneficial for other animals – including deer themselves. There is a huge disease problem in the herd that is coming to this area called chronic wasting disease that is spread by saliva. It was in just a couple Virginia counties two years ago, and now it’s spread to ten.”

Young said that overpopulation is terrible for the healthy survival of deer in other ways, too.

“A lot of deer are dying out there and many appear to be dying because of vehicle collisions, which I would argue is an indicator of overpopulation,” Young said. “There is data, even coming from the AWLA, that an increasing number of deer are dying in vehicular accidents.”

The ARMN has noted that Arlington residents across the county have noticed more and more the damage that deer are doing on their own property.

“There is evidence everywhere of deer overpopulation and of its damaging effects,” Young said. “Over the last five years, it’s undeniable that deer are becoming more habituated around people. A deer’s natural reaction should be fear and avoidance, but I’ve seen more and more deer unafraid. If you have an overpopulation of deer, that’s when they start this habituation. They are significantly sized animals that can pose unintentional threat to people – children, runners, cyclists, and so on. The way deer are now, it’s just not normal behavior.”

## Why the Delay in Action?

Despite their desire for more urgency, the ARMN team does believe they understand why the county is moving slowly.

“The county is so concerned about the reaction from the community that they are moving so slowly,” Young said. “They are expecting this to continue to be controversial and if the county were to propose implementing a deer management program, there would be a lot of pushback. After all, this whole time, you’ve had AWLA is saying there isn’t a problem. They are naturally going to feel like they need evidence to support decision-making.”

Jordan agreed, noting that there will be no shortage of resources for Arlington County to make the right decision when it comes to white-tailed deer management.

“By hiring not one but two contractors, Arlington County is taking extraordinary measures to make sure they have outside experts providing what they need to inform decision-makers,” she said. “I see this as trying to be so careful so that they can gather enough information to explain to the public what they need to do.”

Jordan also encourages Arlington County to look strictly at scientifically-based facts – and not to emotional appeals or unsupported claims – when making deer-related decisions.

“As this conversation moves forward, we need to explore why people are throwing things – facts, statistics that lack the full truth – out there,” Jordan said. “In general, we need to have a further examination of the statements being thrown out there, and digest them for what they are.”

In response to assumptions that the county isn’t being decisive or making swift moves in efforts to please everyone, Abugattas said it’s just not that simple.

“Every jurisdiction must determine the appropriate amount of data required to make deer management decisions,” he said. “This second study provides direct observation and measurement of potential deer impacts that couldn’t be captured by our initial aerial survey. It also leverages the deep subject matter expertise of established deer management researchers and consultants. The two studies complement one another to provide a more robust dataset to inform management decisions. While some decision makers may be comfortable acting on the aerial survey data alone, others will appreciate the more complete picture provided by this complementary study.”

Abugattas added that the county is prepared to make deer-related decisions that are in the best interest of Arlington and its citizens – but reiterated that it won’t be without involving Arlingtonians.

“The county and DPR will be prepared to implement the management strategy that is determined to be the best course of action for Arlington,” Abugattas said. “Arlington County is always open to community engagement throughout our processes and will continue to work with the community if and when any management strategies are implemented.”