

Not Exactly the "Canswer" I Was Hoping For

By KENNETH B. LOURIE



If this past week's test results (EKG, blood pressure and lab work) pass muster, then I will join the ranks, full time, of the thyroid cancer community. At present, the medical plan is to pivot, completely, from any lung cancer treatment - which for the past 18 months has been immunotherapy bi-weekly, and focus instead, exclusively, on my stage IV, papillary thyroid cancer. If I can go forward, I'll be taking three pills a day, at home. No more visits to the Infusion Center and of course, no more infusions. And not that I'm paranoid about getting exposed to the coronavirus, but less exposure to whatever can be transmitted by droplets, door knobs, elevator buttons, etc., can't be a bad thing. The question remains however: Is the medication I'll be receiving likely to have a positive effect? As in, will it cure my thyroid cancer?

What little I already know is that the type of papillary thyroid cancer that I've been diagnosed with recently - after three biopsies, is unfortunately not curable. It is treatable though, just as my previous lung cancer diagnosis was described. I like curable much better. But, treatable I'll have to live with, hopefully for a long time, as I have for 11 and 1/2 years with the originally diagnosed stage IV non small cell lung cancer. My attitude then, as it will be now, is to try and stay alive until the next new drug comes along which might actually cure my thyroid cancer. The interim goal, different from the ultimate goal is stability; turning the incurable disease into a chronic disease, like diabetes, for example. And though curable is the preferred outcome, for those of us with our rear ends in those barcaloungers, stable is perfectly acceptable. In fact, for the many years I was treated for lung cancer, 'stable' became my new favorite word. Shrinkage, cure, remission and N.E.D. (no evidence of disease) was certainly the ideal. But for those of us in the trenches, our reality is often very different.

Living, even in those trenches, is the best reward, and as cancer patients, you learn that any guarantees, presumptions or even entitlements are best left outside the examining room's door. Because once inside, reality takes over (as it likewise does late at night, as you're lying in bed contemplating your predicament, when it tends to get late, early, if you know what I mean?). My friend Sean often jokes by asking me if I'm still on the clock (meaning am I still terminal-ish). I'm on the clock, alright, as I have been since February 27, 2009 when my oncologist first told Team Lourie of my "terminal" diagnosis. Cancer then, as now, is the dreaded disease. Eventually though, the conversation ends and a treatment plan is initiated.

Treatment is often predicated on a series of definite maybes/"we'll see's". Success is measured one lab result, one appointment, one scan and one surgery at a time. No promises are offered and rarely are other patient histories relevant to one's own circumstances. Patients have unique characteristics and it's never quite right to draw parallels. Being a cancer patient is the opposite of being on a "Merry Go 'Round." It's a "Not Very Merry Doesn't Go 'Round" - without the music. Moreover, there's never a brass ring to grab, only an intangible thing called hope.

However, hope is a wonderful thing. Though it doesn't necessarily get you across the finish line, it does enable you to endure the journey. You're where you are and where you're going to be so any kind of assistance - mentally or otherwise, is greatly appreciated. In my mind, the only pathway is forward. And though the challenges seem endless, a proper positive attitude that leaves open the possibilities of living life with cancer rather than succumbing to it creates a kind of karma that reflects off of others and is reabsorbed back into you. It's this positivity loop which makes the unbearable a bit more bearable. At least it does for me.

My father used to say: "Every knock is a boost." Imagine what every boost would mean to a cancer patient? It's almost like medicine, but without the negative side effects. And who doesn't need that? Those of us diagnosed with two types of cancer, that's who!

Don't knock it if you haven't tried it.

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

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FROM PAGE 9

Vernon Genealogical Society will speak about genealogical research on UK ancestors. Online access information to be emailed to members and registered nonmembers. Email registration by Sept. 11 to contact-us@mvgenealogy.org. See <http://www.mvgenealogy.org>.

ART BY MAIL II

The "Art by Mail II" Online Exhibit (September 1 - November 1, 2020) from Del Ray Artisans features small format original paintings in watercolor, oil, and acrylic; mixed media art and artful cards; plus, small 3D works by our members. Purchases are mailed to you from the artists! Del Ray Artisans is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts organization in Alexandria, VA. Directly support the arts in your community and enjoy the exhibit today: www.DelRayArtisans.org/artbymail

ACT VIRTUAL CELEBRATION

ACT for Alexandria's Fall Salud and Virtual Celebration will be held Wednesday, Sept. 23 from 7-8 p.m. This event will be an evening when the best of Alexandria — the community, the friendships, the supportive spirit — is on full display. And while this year they are not able to gather in person, the virtual celebration still promises to be a festive evening to come together to mingle, enjoy some entertainment, and toast our collective efforts to support the community during this unprecedented time. Unique to this event, all guests will receive a Cheers in a Box, full of local goodies and party necessities. It will have an engaging virtual platform and a program filled with lots of special treats, including musical performances by local singer-songwriter Luke James Shaffer and Billboard-charting violinist Chelsey Green. Support ACT by purchasing your ticket at bit.ly/ACTfallsalud2020. Registration closes Sept. 14.

LIBRARY HOSTS "RIGHTFULLY HERS" EXHIBIT

The Kate Waller Barrett Branch at 717 Queen Street is currently hosting a new pop-up exhibition from the National Archives, "Rightfully Hers," commemorating the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment. Rightfully Hers contains simple messages exploring the history of the ratification of the 19th amendment, women's voting rights before and after the 19th, and its impact today. Despite decades of marches, petitions, and public debate to enshrine a woman's right to vote in the constitution, the 19th Amendment — while an enormous milestone — did not grant voting rights for all. The challenges of its passage reverberate to the ongoing fight for gender equity today. This exhibit runs through Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2020.

REC PROGRAM MODIFIED

The Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA) will offer a full-day program that supports ACPS Virtual PLUS+ learning for elementary school aged children enrolled in kindergarten through fifth grade. The program will be offered from September 14 through December 18 at Mount Vernon and Patrick Henry Recreation Centers. Recreation Leaders will provide supervision of ACPS virtual learning from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and after school recreation from 2:30 to 5 p.m. The program fee is \$460, or \$228 with free/reduced priced school meals documentation; \$190 with SNAP benefits; or \$114 with TANF benefits. Alexandria residents interested in participating are required to verify eligibility by completing a Pre-Registration Eligibility Form. The form is available online in both English and Spanish at alexandriava.gov/Recreation. Paper copies will be available beginning on Saturday, August 29. To request that a paper copy be mailed or to make an in-person appointment to complete the form, call the Registration and Reservation Office at 703-746-5414. A questionnaire can also be picked up and dropped off at an outdoor drop box at the following locations:

Lee Center, 1108 Jefferson Street
Mount Vernon Recreation Center, 2701 Commonwealth Avenue
Patrick Henry Recreation Center, 4653 Taney

Eligibility forms must be submitted by September 4 and all applicants will be contacted September 8-9. Eligible families must complete their registration by September 11. Once the pre-registration process is complete, general registration for any remaining capacity will begin September 14 online on a first-come, first-served basis.

Please see the ACPS Virtual Plus+ Childcare page for information about additional services provided by RPCA and other partners. Visit alexandriava.gov/Recreation for more information about programs offered by the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Mount Vernon At Home is a community Village, providing support, services, and community to seniors in the area. Volunteers are needed for a variety of services, with transportation to medical appointments are greatest need. They can also use help with in-home handyman work and handling IT problems. If you are interested in volunteering, contact info@moutnvernonathome.org or call 703-303-4060.

NOW THRU AUG. 28

Free Outdoor Yoga. Weekly beginning Wednesday, 6:30-7:30 p.m. At Del Ray Psych & Wellness, 1900 Mt. Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. Maureen Clyne, an affiliated agent with Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage in the Alexandria office, will be leading the eighth season of free outdoor yoga classes in the Del Ray section of Alexandria. This community event, Cool Yoga 2020, is taught by Clyne, a senior yoga instructor, and is sponsored by Del Ray Psych & Wellness. In the event of rain, class will be cancelled by 4:30 p.m. Announcements will be made on the Cool Yoga Meet-up Group website and on the Cool Yoga Facebook page. Call 703-967-8884.

ONLINE WORSHIP SERVICE

Fairlington United Methodist Church. Sundays. 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. Via Zoom. Address: 3900 King Street, Alexandria. Are you looking for hope, healing, and community during this time? You are invited to online worship at 11am every Sunday morning. Pray, sing, read scripture, share a meditation, and respond. Follow this link: <https://fairlingtonumc.org/worship/watch-or-listen-to-a-service>

GREEN SPRING GARDENS PHONE ORDERS

Green Spring Gardens is now offering phone orders and curbside pickup of plants from its Garden Gate Plant Shop. Choose from an assortment of shrubs and perennials, place your order, and have the plants loaded directly into your trunk.

Gardeners who want to shop at Green Spring can go to the park's website to see what is for sale. The order form, which is updated weekly, lists what plants are available, their size and price. Once you've made your selections, call Green Spring at 703-642-5173 to place your order. All orders are being taken by telephone and must be paid by credit card. Orders are accepted Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and on Sundays from noon to 4 p.m. Pickups are Wednesdays and Fridays from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Plants can be picked up in the traffic circle at the Horticulture Center at Green Spring Gardens, located at 4603 Green Spring Road in Alexandria.

AUDITIONS FOR PEACEFUL PROTESTERS

Auditions are being held in person for volunteers for the Red Rebels Brigade in Alexandria. The Red Rebel Brigade is a movement within Extinction Rebellion, an international ecological peaceful protest organization. The Red Rebels are a performing protest group, wearing long red costumes, pale dramatic mime face and performing in slow motion without speaking to awaken our human compassion for the earth. Overall fitness is needed, young and old are welcome. To audition contact Virginia