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Alexandria Gazette Packet

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PHOTOS BY JEANNE THEISMANN/GAZETTE PACKET

Dancers from the Foley Academy of Irish Dance in Reston perform Aug. 25 at the Alexandria Irish Festival in Waterfront Park.

Dublin the Fun

Irish Festival raises funds for St. Patrick's Day parade.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Thousands turned out Aug. 25 to celebrate all things Irish at the 2018 Alexandria Irish Festival and to pay tribute to the man regarded as the founder of the city's St. Patrick's Day Parade. Held at Waterfront Park, this year's festival was dedicated to Pat Troy, a co-founder of the Ballyshaners organization, which sponsors the annual parade. Troy died just days after serving as the grand marshal of the 2018 parade.



Ballyshaner volunteer Pat Gerrity, right, helps Annie Malley Crowe as she browses some of the Pat Troy memorabilia for sale Aug. 25 at the Alexandria Irish Festival in Waterfront Park.

"It's been an incredible day," said Ballyshaners volunteer Maggie Hayes. "It's been way better than I thought it would be. People have been very generous."

Hayes and fellow Ballyshaner Pat Gerrity spent the day in the "Pat Troy's Memories" tent. Memorabilia from Troy's Ireland's Own Restaurant along with items from his personal collection were sold to help raise funds for next year's parade.

"My husband and I had a lot of dates at Pat Troy's," said Annie Malley Crowe as she browsed the memorabilia with her son Colin. "We even celebrated my husband's promotion to Lt. Colonel there so even though I didn't really know him, Pat and the restaurant are a part of my own history."

Troy was known for his collection of pins from various law enforcement agencies and a hat from the New York Fire Department with various pins sold for \$300.

The centerpiece of the day's sale was the table President Ronald Reagan occupied when he made a surprise visit to Ireland's Own on St. Patrick's Day in 1988. Tom Mooney, the owner of Murphy's Grand Irish Pub on King Street, purchased the table at an undisclosed price. "I'm glad that table has a home where it will be appreciated," said Troy's widow Bernadette. All proceeds from the festival will go to support the 2019 St. Patrick's Day Parade.

See www.ballyshaners.org.

'A Knotty Problem'

Testing shows persistent student achievement gaps in public schools.

BY DAN BRENDL
GAZETTE PACKET

Standardized test results for the 2017-18 academic year, released last week, indicate a few bright spots for Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS), but also room for improvement.

While students did better in certain areas, they generally lag in statewide performance, and also suffer various enduring achievement gaps between demographic subgroups.

Public schools annually assess proficiencies in reading, writing, math, science, and history/social

science. Tests measure against Standards of Learning (SOL), which are "minimum expectations for what students should know," according to the Virginia Department of Education. "The assessments also provide an objective means for measuring achievement gaps between student subgroups and for determining the progress ... toward closing these gaps."

Compared to the 2015-16 school year, ACPS students improved most in writing. In particular, the pass rate for Hispanic students increased by six percentage points. Performance remained fairly flat.

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McCain Remembered

Political maverick, EHS grad dies at 81.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Philip Bermingham was a new business owner in 1980 when a young Naval aviator and his soon-to-be bride walked into his photography studio on South Washington Street in Alexandria. The couple, at the time residents of Wolfe Street, wanted a formal wedding portrait taken. Thus began a friendship between Bermingham and John McCain, who would go on to be-

come one of the nation's most respected political leaders. "John was a Congressional liaison at the time," recalled Bermingham. "But he told me that he was retiring from the military to run for Congress. I told him to call me if he won and he did. I did the McCain's Christmas card photos every year for several years after that. They were

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John McCain was a 1954 graduate of Episcopal High School in Alexandria.

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