

Help Alexandria breathe free of cigarette smoke

To the editor:

One of the major goals of the Clean and Smoke-Free Air Coalition of Alexandria is to motivate and assist tobacco users of all ages to quit smoking and make effective resources available to those who are ready to quit. This is why we very much support the American Cancer Society's Great American Smoke-out Day on November 17, which encourages everyone to walk away from tobacco for 24 hours.

Data from the Centers for Disease Control show that 70 percent of adult smokers say they want to quit, but many report they don't have the resources to do so. Nevertheless, in 2008, about 45 percent of adult smokers actually attempted to quit. Tobacco dependence is a chronic condition often requiring repeated interventions, but effective treatments and helpful

resources exist: Train2Quit is an interactive online program that will walk you through the steps to becoming tobacco-free. Also, you can call the state Quitline at 1-800-QUIT NOW; it provides free, evidence-based, individualized

age 18 or younger. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "every day nearly 3,500 children under 18 try their first cigarette, and about 850 of them become regular smokers. And almost 300 of those

to secondhand smoke; even a brief exposure to secondhand smoke can be harmful."

The Clean and Smoke-Free Air Coalition of Alexandria — one of four work groups of the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria — was established to make recommendations to prevent death and disease within our community caused by tobacco use and involuntary exposure to secondhand smoke. The group is working hard to develop a plan that will enable Alexandrians to say proudly, by the end of 2015, Alexandria is the most smoke-free city of its size in America.

Among the various kinds of strategies under consideration for achieving this vision are: restricting minors' access to tobacco; encouraging teen leadership at T.C. Williams High School to initiate tobacco prevention programs; encouraging health provid-

ers to screen for tobacco use; increasing awareness of and access to effective smoking cessation services; discouraging smoking in public spaces especially where children may be present; encouraging parents not to smoke in their home or in their cars; and fostering smoke-free air policies in multiunit housing.

Each year, every surgeon general reaffirms what their predecessors have been saying for the past 20 years: "Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in America." We welcome other members of the Alexandria community to join with the coalition and the partnership in our vision of making Alexandria the most smoke-free city of its size in America.

*- Richard E. Merritt
Chair, Clean and Smoke-Free
Air Coalition of Alexandria*

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counseling by highly trained coaches.

National data tell us the fastest growing segment of the adult smoking population is young adults, between the ages of 19 to 25. We also know that among adults who smoke, almost 70 percent began smoking regularly at

will eventually die prematurely from tobacco addiction."

Another tobacco-related concern within Alexandria is the level of involuntary exposure to secondhand smoke. The surgeon general of the United States has affirmed "there is no risk-free exposure

Eminent domain: threaten one of us, threaten all of us

To the editor:

Alexandrians should be aware their real estate — be it a home, a business or a piece of land — is not protected against our city officials or politically connected developers who want that property. We must be alert to the city's misuse of eminent domain.

Fear of government's abuse of eminent domain increased in 2005 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a city's taking of property from one private owner to give to another for development was legal under the Fifth Amendment.

This ruling sparked a movement across the United States to protect individuals' property from government seizure. In Virginia, during the 2011 session, a bill was passed in favor of amending Virginia's Constitution to explicitly protect private property. The amendment

addresses the power of local and state governments to take property from its lawful owners for so-called "public use." The use of eminent domain makes it legal for the City of Alexandria to take a property at "market value" and then sell it to a private resident or a developer or corporation.

The city has already threatened to use this abusive power. Earlier this year the city offered to buy property from The Old Dominion Boat Club at the foot of King Street. The Old Dominion Boat Club did not want to sell property it has owned since 1883. City Attorney Jim Banks declared eminent domain remained a tool available to the city council to take this property from its legal owners.

Our council continues to look at private property as available for whatever plans it has for development of the waterfront. Our elected offi-

cials should declare they will not use eminent domain to take from one private owner for the benefit of another person, company or developer.

Each council member should pledge that he or she will use eminent domain only for truly essential public needs, such as transportation, schools, power and sewer.

We the people of Alexandria must be vigilant. Our government's threat to use its immense power of eminent domain for nonessential government functions should be a warning to all Alexandrians their property rights are held in little regard by this council.

Our city council threatens each of us when it threatens one of us.

*- Beal Lowen
Alexandria*

Nothing like Titans football in autumn

To the editor:

Sports reporter Derrick Perkins has covered the T.C. Williams High School sports scene quite well. His coverage of football, cross-country, volleyball and a

senior recognition day — against East Potomac at 1 p.m.

Come out and see football played up close and with instant replay on the huge overhead Jumbotron.

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T.C. crew cleanup in your last issue is appreciated.

However, Alexandria football fans should also know of two upcoming events: T.C. Williams' homecoming game Saturday at 1 p.m. against Lee, and the final game of the season, November 5 —

And hear and see the Titans marching band — the pride of Alexandria — perform at half-time, with Lady Titans cheerleaders leading the crowd's pep.

*- Mike Oliver
Alexandria*