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sprung from the seed of Andromeda—a band given birth by a group of teens who all attended School of Rock. Three summers ago, the band members dissolved Andromeda, and out of what remained, Sun Against Artemis rose on the horizon, a flare of blinding light. The popularity of this band has grown exponentially over the intervening years, and later this month, they will release their first EP with five original songs. *(continued on page 10)*



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COVER IMAGE:

Photographed by Rebecca D'Angelo

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National Night Out Returns to Northside

NATIONAL NIGHT Out in Bellevue, sponsored by the Bellevue Merchants Association, returned after the Covid hiatus. Our selfless firefighters from Fire Station 16 at North and Chamberlayne avenues, Richmond police officers, Sheriff Antoinette V. Irving, Third District Councilwoman Ann-Frances Lambert, along with Jerry DeVoss, president of the Bellevue Civic Association, Brooke Klippstein Ullman, founder of Bellevue Porchella, and scores of Bellevue neighbors made for a memorable summer evening. With terrific food and sweets from the Mill on MacArthur, Stir Crazy Cafe, Demi's Mediterranean Kitchen, Dot's Back Inn, Decatur's Garage, Zorba's Pizza Express, Mi Jalisco, and the ever-popular root beer floats compliments of Rich's Stitches and Once Upon a Vine.



Ever-popular misting tents at both ends of MacArthur Avenue.



Our selfless firefighters from Fire Station 16 at North and Chamberlayne.



Brooke Ullman, founder of Bellevue Porchella, and Jerry DeVoss, president of the Bellevue Civic Association.



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Richmond sheriff Antoinette V. Irving with Bellevue resident.



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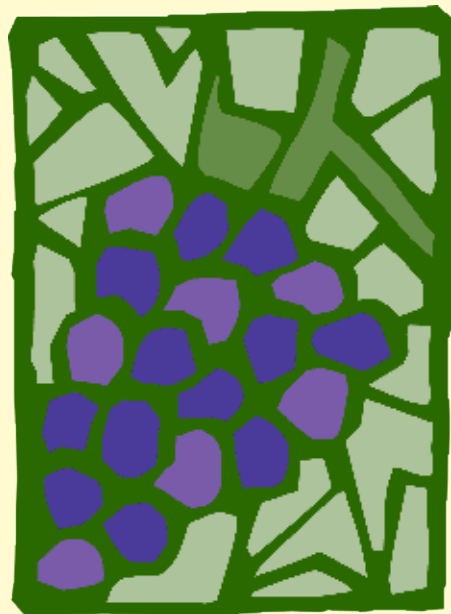
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BOOK REVIEW

Learning to Love Like a Dog

by **FRAN WITHROW**

WAS A LITTLE WORRIED that “A Dog Walks into a Nursing Home” would be yet another sweet story of a dog who changes the life of their family but dies in the end. I would read, clutching my box of tissues, while swearing never to open another book like it.

But I could not have been more wrong about Sue Halpern’s glorious book. Halpern’s story about her therapy dog, Pransky, is a wise and warm-hearted gem. And spoiler alert: the dog does not die in the end!

Pransky is seven years old when Halpern decides her dog needs a job. After much musing, Halpern takes Pransky through therapy dog training, and her description of the process is fascinating. Pransky and Halpern end up working at their local nursing home, and what seems like a simple assignment leads Halpern to explore ethics, compassion, and morality.

Initially, Halpern approaches residents with caution. But Pransky goes unhesitatingly into each room even if a resident appears to reject them. Slowly Halpern learns how to cherish the residents, and discovers what they can teach her about living life fully. As she deepens her connections with them, Halpern learns that wisdom and joy can be found in any setting. Halpern watches her dog accept everyone, no matter who they are or how they respond. She realizes that Pransky’s unconditional love sets an example of morality; showing her how we should live together with kindness and care.

As a way of pondering this concept of morality, Halpern focuses each chapter on a different virtue. “Restraint” hooked me immediately as Halpern describes her foray into dog obedience. Getting a dog who is used to running free accustomed

to a leash is not easy. And don’t miss the story of Pransky’s lack of will power when left in the car with some oatmeal fudge bars.

“Faith,” which is (fortunately) about so much more than organized religion, “fortitude” in the face of the fragility of life in both dogs and people, and “hope” are chapters about residents like Clyde, Martha, and Dottie. Halpern learns more about morality from each of them. In the nursing home, Halpern comes face to face with how unutterably precious life is, and that there are gifts to be found even near life’s end. Halpern’s description of hope, in a place most of us see as hopeless, is lovely: “it stands up to the negative...it creates possibility in the world. It is a defiant act of creativity and of imagination.”

Halpern’s warm writing style and engaging prose make this book a “must read.” You are in for a treat if you follow Halpern and her beloved dog into the nursing home, where she discovers she has received more than she has given. By looking at mortality and morality, we are reminded not to go “squandering your inheritance.” Every day is a gift. How can we live with hope, resilience, and love during our brief stay on this earth? Maybe it is as simple as following your dog into a nursing home.

Or following your heart, wherever it might lead. **NJ**

“A Dog Walks into a Nursing Home”

By Sue Halpern

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DIVERSIONS

Of Mycophiles and Shrooms

by **FAYERUZ REGAN**

ONE OF THE perks of Bryant Logan's job was the afternoon stroll. Collegiate School's grounds are ringed by an old-growth forest. He recalled the beautiful fall afternoon that he stumbled upon outlandish mushrooms in the forest.

"The colors and textures were otherworldly," he said. He was overcome with wonder. It was akin to slipping on a scuba suit and discovering a strange world below the water's surface. "I figured some of them had to be edible, so I got a book and used it as a reference."

Bryant Logan became so adept at hunting for mushrooms, that he started selling them to Richmond restaurants such as Southbound, The Roosevelt, and Dutch & Co..

When he samples fungi he's never found before, he likes to taste it in its purest form. He's fine with a little butter and salt in a hot skillet. Sometimes, he'll find the same mushroom growing in another area, and it will have a different flavor profile. "It depends on the soil," he said. "Soil can make mushrooms taste earthy, woody, even a meaty umami flavor. I found chantarelles that tasted just like bacon."

His most outlandish find was a mushroom called lion's mane, with ghostly white lumps covered in a shaggy fringe. It was so alien-like, that it gave Bryant pause. "But when I took a bite, it tasted like fried chicken and hash browns," he said.

The most profitable find? One was a King Bolete, and a cluster of porcini the size of a muffuletta sandwich.

Bryant laments that Richmond is quickly losing its natural habitats for wild mushrooms. But if you think the issue is a lack of mushroom variety, think again. The problem is exponentially bigger.

It was recently discovered that trees communicate with one another.

In fact, they have sophisticated social networks; building alliances, sharing resources – even sending distress signals for drought and disease. And it's all happening underground, through extensive fungal networks, called the mycorrhizal web. The wild mushrooms Bryant finds are just the tip of the "wood-wide-web," as it's jokingly called.

These mycorrhizal webs can stretch for hundreds of miles. Sending chemical, hormonal and slow-pulsing electric signals, it's similar to an animal's nervous system. A tree being attacked by Japanese boring beetles can send distress signals, and surrounding trees will respond by producing a protective sap. In short, these trees look out for one another in order to survive.

Unfortunately, developers in Richmond are razing the old hardwood forests at a rapid rate. Logging companies partner with these developers, hauling off precious hardwoods. Woodlands are being replaced by treeless cul-de-sacs and strip malls with vast parking lots. And while the expansion of cities is inevitable, the replanting practices are sub-par and designed for profit.

Pines are cheaper than hardwoods, and developers opt for this soft wood because it grows faster and costs less, increasing their profit margins. Pines don't have the rich fungal networks that hardwoods do, and like anything else in an ecosystem, a lack of diversity is a weakness.

A thin line of pines is often planted around the perimeter of parking lots, or housing developments with aspirational British names. This creates the illusion of a tree line. A smattering of pines could be planted beside a playground to simulate a forest, but the diversity of the land has been stripped away.


When mycorrhizal networks are being destroyed, any hardwoods that are left behind may be physically disconnected from nearby trees and lose the benefits of the fungal community underground.



Bryant Logan, mushroom hunter. Photo credit to Kathleen Logan.

Often, developers and logging companies claim to save old-growth hardwoods by partnering with a Heritage Tree Program. This tends to mollify environmentalists and those passionate about biodiversity. Unfortunately, logging companies will often clear-cut an entire forest, leaving behind a single, token tree. This is taking advantage of people's lack of knowledge. Many tree species need both male and female trees for reproduction. A stand-alone hardwood, or a hardwood surrounded by newly-planted pine is practically a death sentence.

In lieu of these disappearing forests and magnificent mushrooms, Bryant suggested taking advantage of the older, wilder parts of Richmond to have a foraging experience.

"The best and pretty much only time you can forage for mushrooms in Virginia is in the late summer and early fall," he said. "You need a good rain, followed by steamy, humid weather. There's only a small window once this happens. In three or four days, the bugs will get to them." He also insists on buying a mushroom guide to bring along. Happy hunting! 

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SUN AGAINST ARTEMIS

GIVING VOICE TO AN INEXPRESSIBLE DUALITY

HERE'S THE LINEUP:

vocalist June Kambourian, with Nick Erickson on lead guitar, Cason Duszak on drums, Raegan Harrhy on keys and guitar, and Cole Wise on bass. And each member of this Richmond band is a powerhouse in his or her own right. On a blistering July afternoon, we are gathered around a table in a house in Bellevue. Only Raegan Harrhy is missing from the group; he's up in Maine at the time of this interview, but he will send me a little bit about himself later in the week. Each one of them is stoked about the upcoming release of their EP which features five of their original songs. And they are deferential to one another—admirably so—quick to point out the team effort behind the production of each song they create. They all seem to understand that the whole is only equal to the sum of the parts; egos don't rear their hideous heads here.

Side note: There must be something in the Kambourian genetic code that lends itself to musical composition and performance. June Kambourian and Nick Erickson are cousins who grew up on the same street less than two blocks away from one another. I have known both of these young Northsiders from the time they were still in single digits. One evening, in the home of Nick's mother and her partner, I watched and listened as Nick played his electric guitar. He was just thirteen years old at the time, yet he had a command of the instrument I had rarely seen in professionals three times his age. Nick made the guitar sing like it was B.B. King. And the first time I heard June sing, when she was under sixteen, I was blown away; her voice will stop you dead in your tracks. Even then she had the range and emotive quality of Frances, the UK singer-songwriter.

One thing all members of Sun Against Artemis have in common: from a very early age they attended School of Rock. So that is where we begin.

Remembering the years he spent at School of Rock, Nick says, "It honestly helped me in the way of playing because they force you to learn other people's music, and learning songs in their entirety helps you progress the most on your instrument. It's much better than just running scales."

Cason began taking classes at School of Rock when he was just nine years old. "I was seven or eight when I first started drumming," he says. "I had ADHD bad growing up, but I found that drumming re-

ally helped with it and it kept it under control. School of Rock helped me focus even more on drumming."

But June has a slightly different take on School of Rock. "It was all covers and they didn't really like it when you would do somebody's cover in your own way," she says. "They wanted it to sound like the track pretty much. They were weird about that." And there seemed to be a lack of prominent female vocalists for students to emulate. "It was all man songs, songs sung by men," June remembers. "I very rarely had songs sung by a female vocalist. There was only one I can think of and it was Misery Business by Paramore which is the most cliché female vocal song there is."

June does say that School of Rock did prepare her for the stage. "We were in a house band and we got little band gigs," she says. "They were at events that partnered with School of Rock. Live venues. We played at the Canal Club, Capitol Ale House, Watermelon Festival, a few breweries."

And for Raegan, as he would explain in an email, School of Rock was a game changer. "I never really had the chance to play with other people apart from school band class until I started at School of Rock," she would write. "It was a great opportunity to gain stage experience and meet other young musicians, and I'm so grateful that I had the chance to learn so much,



Nick, Cole, and June

and meet some of my best friends."

Like the other members of the band, Cole began learning guitar at an early age. After taking acoustic guitar lessons for two years in his home, he began at School of Rock. "I started there when I was eleven," he says. "It really kicked off from there."

We begin talking about influences. "A lot of my technique comes from a classic rock background," says Cole. "Lately though, I'm getting involved with more modern techniques. Jacob Umansky has a crazy technique that I've been studying for a long time, and there's also Adam Nolly from Periphery."

Raegan will later tell me that his influences span the entire spectrum of music. "There are a lot of artists from many different genres that

have influenced me as a musician," he will say. "Close to our genre of music, I'm a big fan of Zachary Garren and Aaron Marshall, but I'm personally inspired by the storytelling and musicality of artists I grew up listening to like Leonard Cohen, Elton John, and Billy Joel, especially as a piano player. My biggest musical influence, however, has always been my older brother, Camden, as a guitar player and musician in general. I started playing music because of him."

Nick remembers different influences at different stages of his musical development. "I listened to a lot classic blues guitarists, but I was never super into it," he says. "I was into the shreddy stuff. I think honestly I had a good ear for picking out rudimentary stuff done within blues and I could kind of mimic it,

BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN
PHOTOS BY REBECCA D'ANGELO

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but phrasing-wise it was never super pristine until later. I was trying to mimic what I heard in songs that sounded good just kind of by ear.”

Cason talks about how he gradually filled his tool belt over the years, learning techniques from a variety of drummers. “I’ve rotated through so many different phases and different bands that it’s really hard to pinpoint just one person who influenced me,” he tells me. “I take inspiration from so many different people. But one drummer I’ve always admired is Neil Peart who passed six or seven months ago. He was just incredible for the entire world of drumming. Just completely new unheard of progressive things that he added.”

It takes June exactly one second to name the fellow vocalist who first caught her attention. “The first person I was ever inspired by was Adele,” she says. “My old nanny brought me her 21 CD. That was an eye-opening moment for me. And I’m really into Ella Fitzgerald. And then there’s Lucy Dacus. Oh my God! I just saw her. We took a train all the way to New York just to see



From left to right: Raegan, Nick, Cole, June, Cason.

her the other day. When I hear her I notice that her technique is very similar to a lot of jazz singers that I like.”

While June, Cason, Cole, and Rae-

gan were still attending School of Rock, they created a band called Andromeda. Then in 2019, these four founding members of that band dissolved it, and out of its ashes there rose Sun Against Artemis,

with Nick joining them as lead guitarist. Almost instantly they began doing gigs all over town from The Camel to The Canal Club.

Sun Against Artemis’s style is de-

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Sun Against Artemis in front of the Bellevue Arch.

cidedly post-hardcore, an offshoot of punk rock that embraces the aggressive intensity of the original form, while emphasizing greater artistic expression. It all began back in the 1980s with bands like Husker Du and Minutemen. Even the dance form associated with this genre—moshing—is derivative of the punk era’s slam dancing.

Nick talks about the process the band employs when writing a new piece of music. It is definitely a collaborative effort. “The way I approach the writing is this,” Nick says. “I have my guitar parts in my head for a whole song, and then I record them and then I program some basic drum part to go behind it that gives structure to the song.” But that is just the beginning.

“That’s when I send the ideas to Cole and Cason and June and Raegan,” Nick continues. “Cason would take the drum part and he would change it around. Cole adds his bass parts in. We did that for every song on the EP. The songs come from this little image I had, and everyone else evolves it and gives it personality.”

Cason nods, and says, “Not to let Nick downplay his writing. He puts some fire down on the tracks for drums. It’s just the extra nuances I add. It’s still great stuff that he puts down originally on the demos.”

And then June says, “For this EP, Nick wrote most of the lyrics. Nick will actually track some demo vocals, and then I’ll listen to it, and then we either track exactly what that is or we talk about what we would want to change and how we would want to do it and then it gets recorded.”

June recalls recently speaking with Cole about another Richmond band they had just heard. “I was like, ‘All of these parts individually are really good, but they don’t blend together,’” she says. “And I was saying that it was really helpful that Nick works a lot on the vocal melodies, and just doesn’t throw me into it, and because he’s writing the instrumental he can also mesh them together really well, and I think it sounds very cohesive.”

Just a few days before the interview, Nick and his band members

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were talking with their producer, a man named Mikey. “We were going through the lore of the EP,” Nick explains. “We went back and forth and pinpointed a bunch of exact themes. The lyrics though are intentionally ambiguous enough to mean whatever you want them to mean. But each song pertains to the mind in a certain way.”

For instance, one track is about twisted and demented minds that do terrible things. “Another song is about your mind blasting you with oppressive dreams,” says Nick. “One is about the manifestation of negative energy and how negative scenarios will arise. But if you can harness the power of the mind you can make some good stuff happen.”

The final song is utterly ambiguous. “How does your mind interpret this last song?” Nick asks, rhetorically. “The lyrics are very open-ended and have no general meaning.”

June remembers remembers the making of that song, and her response to it. “Nick and I worked on that one together and it was a long span of time before the lyr-


ics were finished,” June says. “And when I heard it I was like, ‘Oh my God this is heartbreaking. Are you okay, Nick? This is some deep stuff you’re saying.’”

And Nick’s response, according to his cousin: “I’m fine. Honestly, it just kind of sounded cool.”

Soon enough, with the release of the EP, you’ll be able to hear the lyrics for yourself.

“It will be available everywhere,” says June.


Nick immediately chimes in, “TITLE, Amazon Music Prime, Apple Music, Spotify, YouTube. Everywhere.”

And their release party will be held at the venue that is almost like a second home to the band—The Canal Club. 

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The Haitian Revolution

Part II

by JACK R JOHNSON

AFTER TWELVE bloody years, the rebellious slaves of Haiti led by Toussaint Louverture, managed to beat back Napoleon Bonaparte's military, one of the greatest armies in European history. Haiti declared sovereignty on January 1st, 1804—the first country in the Americas to abolish slavery, and the only state in history established by a successful slave revolt. Despite this military victory, Haiti's independence would be short lived. In the military sense, they had won their independence, but the European powers, as well as the United States made Haiti pay for its freedom again and again.

The French hardly conceded defeat, even though Napoleon lost more men in Haiti than at Waterloo. In 1825, a squadron of French warships once again loomed off Haiti's coastline. Some 500 French canons were aimed at their ports. Effectively cut off from the rest of the world, Haitians faced the dour prospect of another decades long war whose ending was in doubt. They knew the world was against them. American lawmakers in particular did not want enslaved people in their own country to be inspired by Haiti's revolution. President Thomas Jefferson – fearing that slaves gaining their independence would spread to the United States-- sought the international isolation of Haiti during his tenure. He assisted the French blockade intended to punish Haiti and closed U.S. ports to all Haitian vessels. The U.S. slaveholders were terrified of that “contagion” known as “liberty.”

Cut off from any assistance, and surrounded again by one of the world's largest militaries, Haiti's president Jean-Pierre Boyer decided to bow to the France's outrageous demand-- a ransom payment for their freedom. According to the New York Times, “Haiti became the world's first and

only country where the descendants of enslaved people paid reparations to the descendants of their masters — for generations.” Worse, because the sum was so exorbitant for that period, some 150 million dollars (equal to about \$21 billion today), Haiti was forced to borrow money in order to pay the “debt.” A French bank, *Crédit Industriel et Commercial*, serviced the loan and charged Haiti an exorbitant interest rate. Those funds in turn were used to finance the building of the Eiffel tower. Haiti did not finish paying off this so called “double debt” until 1947.

The New York Times recently tabulated how much money Haitians paid to the families of their former masters and to the French banks and investors and found “that Haitians paid about \$560 million in today's dollars.” They called the burden imposed on Haiti “perhaps the single most odious sovereign debt in history.”

As World War I began in Europe, France refocused on the war front and from 1910 to 1911, the U. S. took a financial interest in the small island. At the behest of President Wilson and the City National Bank, on December 17, 1914 eight United States Marines walked into the Haitian national bank and took custody of Haiti's gold reserve of about US \$500,000 – the equivalent of \$13,526,578 in 2022 dollars – for ostensible “safe-keeping in New York.” They insisted that Haiti was on the brink of defaulting on their debt despite consistent payments for the better half of a century.

After Haitian president Jean Vilbrun Guillaume Sam was assassinated in 1915, President Wilson sent the U.S. Marines to Haiti again, claiming the invasion was an attempt to prevent anarchy. In reality, the Wilson administration was protecting U.S. assets in the area (and being a bit paranoid about a possible German invasion.) As U.S.M.C. General Smedley Butler noted derisively, “I helped make Haiti and Cuba a de-



Graphic image by Catherine McGuigan

cent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues.” General Butler led the U.S. forces in Haiti, describing himself as a “racketeer for capitalism.”

The subsequent Haitian-American “Treaty” of 1915 created a Haitian military force, a *gendarmerie*, made up of Americans and Haitians and controlled by the U.S. Marines. The United States gained complete control over Haitian finances, and the right to intervene in Haiti whenever the U.S. Government deemed necessary. The U.S. Government also forced the election of a new pro-American President, Philippe Sudr Dartiguenave.


The new Haitian constitution was written by a young Assistant Secretary of the Navy named Franklin D. Roosevelt. The document instituted martial law, required U.S. approval of all Haitian legislation, and erased longtime prohibitions against foreign investors buying land in Haiti. Under the authority of what many Haitians called the “Roosevelt Constitution,” white-owned firms, many from the United States, established sugarcane, cacao, banana, cotton, and tobacco plantations. This was coupled with the return of *corvée*—essentially, forced labor-- a labor regime that closely resembled slavery. The Haitian legislature did not want to pass this constitution, so President Wilson forced Haitian President Dartiguenave to dissolve the legislature, which did not meet again until 1929.

Finally, in 1934, to be consistent with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy, the United States officially withdrew from Haiti while retaining economic connections.

During the two decades of the U.S. occupation of Haiti, approximately 3,000 Haitians were killed by American Marine forces, while the occupiers suffered merely 16 fatalities. The Marine occupation left behind a powerful US-trained military that proved useful to future strong men in the country. The most notorious of which was Francois “Papa Doc” Duvalier who would come to power on the back of this army in 1957.

Today, the life expectancy for Haiti's 10 million people stands at 63.5 years. More than half of the population lives on less than \$2 a day. Deepening social misery has forced Haitians to flee the country in droves. Many Haitians drown in the Caribbean while risking the perilous journey to the United States on small motor boats. The images of American border guards on horseback brutally rounding up Haitian immigrants near the Rio Grande in September of 2021 was searing precisely because it encapsulated so well the treatment of Haiti as a nation over nearly two centuries.

As of February 2022, the Biden administration had deported more than 20,000 Haitian refugees back to the impoverished island nation. **NJ**



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FROM STREET ART to fine art, the 31st annual 43rd Street Festival of the Arts has something for everyone. Join us Saturday, September 10 from 10 am- 4 pm for this juried show of fine crafts and art featuring local and regional artisans. This year's outdoor show will include paintings, prints, pottery, sculpture, jewelry, glasswork, and more. Along with food vendors, there will be live music provided by Mr. Chubby & Sugarfoot, TIN CAN FISH BAND, and The Grateful Dads.

This RVA neighborhood festival benefits CARITAS. Since its inception, the festival has raised more than \$100,000 dollars for CARITAS and those in need. Free and open to the public.

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THE ADAMS FAMILY'S NEW HOME

Befittingly, on Bastille Day, the Adams family celebrated a sort of economic freedom when they moved into their new home in Richmond's North Church Hill neighborhood. John and Tanya Adams and their

four children entered their new home at nine in the morning. The couple will purchase their house through Richmond Habitat for Humanity's Affordable Homeownership Program. Under this program the Adams will pay a pay a zero percent mortgage interest rate.

The Richmond metropolitan area has a severe shortage of affordable housing—about 20,000 in all. Richmond Habitat plans to increase the number of affordable rental and homeownership opportunities throughout the Richmond area. Richmond Habitat homeowners pay an average monthly mortgage payment of \$600, a considerable savings compared with \$1,538, the average fair market rent of a three-bedroom apartment in Richmond.

[N9]



The Adams family with their new home.
Photo credit to Rebecca D'Angelo.



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