



Hot Flashes

Fairfax County Retired Employees Association

May 2025

Message From the Chair

I am sorry to begin this month's message by sharing that Joe Blackwell has passed away. Joe was one of the early members of the Fairfax County Retired Employees Association and a former Chairman. He will be missed by all who knew him—our condolences to his loving family.

Happy news: springtime has finally arrived at the DMV. With spring comes FCREA's annual meeting! This year it will be held on May 7th at 10 AM via Zoom. See the article below for details.

Hot Flashes Editor Chuck Higdon is always looking for fun material. Don't forget to share your vacation experiences with fellow retirees in a future issue! Email your contribution to Chuck at fcrea99@gmail.com or to Bobbie Deegan at 4316 Knott Street, Beltsville, MD 20705, and she will make sure that Chuck gets it.

Sincerely,
Pam Martin, Chairman
Fairfax County Retired Employees Association

Joe Blackwell, the Prior Chairman of the FCREA, passed away on March 19.

Joe was the former Personal Property Division Director of Fairfax County, a retired lieutenant colonel in the US Army, and a former chairman of the Board of Equalization. Joe had suffered a fall in recent months and had moved to the state of Washington so that his daughter could take care of him. Joe

was an incredible human being and a faithful public servant who loved Fairfax County and all his colleagues.

Joe retired from the County in 2005. [Obituary](#)

His daughter, Evelyn, shared her mailing address so you can send your condolences.

Evelyn Blackwell
7519-B
24th Ave NW
Seattle WA 98117



DHR, Benefits Division Update

As a Fairfax County Government retiree and subscriber in a county-sponsored health plan, your first step should always be to contact the insurance carrier's customer service line if you have questions about your plan or concerns about a bill or claim. When contacting a vendor partner's customer service team, many issues, including denials related to timely filing, incomplete claim submissions, and contract and fee schedule disputes, may be quickly resolved through a real-time adjustment by providing requested or additional information. Contact information is available on the back of your insurance card or through our Retiree Benefits Page on the county's public website: [Resources Retiree Benefits](#).



Below are snapshots on accessing our website

Tip: Remember to scroll down the website to view more options



Department Resources

[Department Homepage](#) >

Related Resources

[Health and Wellness Programs](#) >

[Current Health Plans](#) >

[Becoming Medicare Eligible](#) >

[Life Insurance](#) >

[Resource and Video Library](#) >

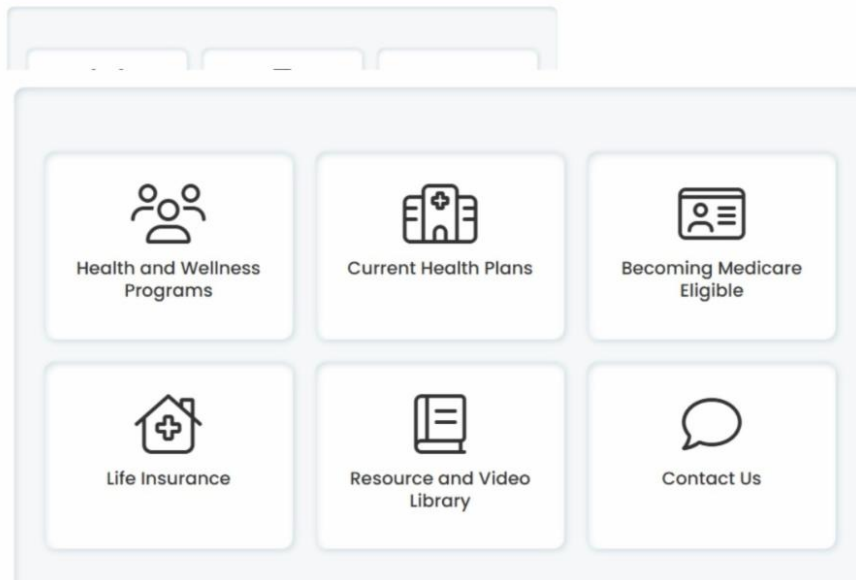
[Contact Us](#) >

Announcements

3/28/2025 - Cigna Medicare Letter

2025 MotivateMe information is here!

Visit the [Health and Wellness Programs](#) page for details.



Contacting us...

The Department of Human Resources phone line has recently been enhanced to an automated system. The Benefits Division team can still be contacted directly through our email: DHRBenefitsDivision@fairfaxcounty.gov.

The Benefits Division in the Department of Human Resources administers medical/vision, dental, life insurance, and deferred compensation plan benefits for Fairfax County government employees and retirees. Our team can help you verify and update benefit enrollments and premium and benefit deduction questions. We are also available to address escalated service and claims concerns after retirees have connected with vendor customer service. Please email our team directly at DHRBenefitsDivision@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Save a Trip! To better meet retiree needs, impromptu in-person visits to the Department of Human Resources and the Benefits Division are discouraged due to the increase in our remote workforce. We have transitioned to appointments only. If you need to meet with a team member in person, please reach out to us in advance to schedule an appointment to ensure that a team member is on-site to see you.

Retirees who have questions regarding retiree health plans and life insurance benefits, or need to make an appointment, should email our team directly at

Family Caregivers Resources



Understanding Dementia: Community Support and Resources

Dementia is a general term for a decline in mental ability severe enough to interfere with daily life. According to the Alzheimer's Association, approximately 7 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease, a common form of dementia, with numbers expected to rise to 12.7 million by 2050.

The Fairfax Area Agency on Aging, in the Department of Family Services (DFS), recognizes the importance of community support and offers resources. It's important to remember that these efforts alone are insufficient. Awareness and education, which are vital in fostering an inclusive environment for individuals, require the active participation of the community. Programs, such as free DFS family caregiver consultations, provide caregivers with information and referrals tailored to their situation. Additional programs, such as Caregiver webinars and the Dementia Caregiver series, aim to empower and enhance caregivers' overall health and effectiveness by assisting caregivers in managing their responsibilities.

In Fairfax, VA, the Dementia Friendly Fairfax initiative is a beacon of hope. Dementia Friendly Fairfax envisions a community where people with dementia and their care partners can engage in various activities, be supported in the highest quality of life, and live independently for as long as possible. The Dementia Friendly Fairfax initiative started through a partnership with Goodwin House, Insight Memory Care Center, the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging, and the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging. The Dementia Friendly Fairfax Action Team provides Dementia Friends Information Sessions to educate people about dementia and the most common type of dementia, share five key messages about dementia, and explain one approach to communicate with a person with dementia effectively. Participants in the session, known as Dementia Friends, are encouraged to turn that understanding into practical actions.

To learn more about resources, call the Aging, Disability, and Caregiving Resources Line at [703-324-7948](tel:703-324-7948), visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/OlderAdults, or visit [DFS Family Resources PDF](#)

Cost of Living Adjustment

The annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for FY 2026 has been announced at **2.4%**. This percentage is applied to your base benefit and any accumulated COLAs from prior years. The new amount will be effective with your July 2025 benefit payment. If you have been retired for less than a year, your COLA will be prorated.

EXAMPLE, retired more than one year:
 7/1/2025 COLA = 2.4%

Partial view of pay advice:

Income	Current	YTD Income
Base Amount	2,014.43	10,072.15
Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)	138.62	693.10
Pre-Social Security Benefit	1,007.21	5,036.05

Base Benefit	\$2,104.43
Accumulated COLAs	\$ 138.62
Adjusted Gross Subject to COLA	\$ 2,153.05
Amount Subject to COLA	\$ 2,153.05
FY 2026 COLA Percentage	x 2.4%
Total adjustment amount	\$ 51.67

The increase (\$51.67) will be added to the current COLA balance, bringing the COLA total from \$138.62 to \$190.29 beginning with the July benefit payment.

For more information about the COLA, please check out our page on the website:
[COLA percentages are announced: 2.4% for all three Systems](#)

Changes in Tax Withholding

If you found that you need to adjust your tax withholding, please use the following forms:

Federal tax withholding form [2025 Form W-4P](#)
 Virginia tax withholding form [Form VA-4P](#)

If you have questions about completing the forms, please contact a tax advisor.

REMINDER – Fairfax Credit Union/NextMark Account Holders

NextMark Credit Union and Apple Federal Credit Union have merged. If any part of

your retirement benefit is direct deposited to a NextMark account, you need to fill out our direct deposit form and provide new banking information. If you have already done so, thank you!

[A008_Direct_Deposit_Agreement 1-28-2025 F.pdf](#)
[A007_Secondary_Deposit_Agreement_1-29-2025 F.pdf](#)

Did You Know...

There is a second newsletter that you can choose to receive! Our executive director writes a newsletter called “RetireMinute”. Currently it’s sent by email on an as needed basis to all retirees who subscribed to it from our website, asked to be added to the distribution list, or had accurate email addresses recorded in PensionGold.

Previous issues and the link to sign up are here: [RetireMinute Retiree News | Retirement Systems](#).

Contact Information

As always, your payroll specialist is ready to help you. Completed forms, including tax withholding forms and direct deposit forms, can be returned to our office by mail or fax to [703-653-9543](tel:703-653-9543). You can also email them to your payroll specialist.

Retiree Last Name Starts with	Specialist	Email Address	Phone Number
A-K	Dayle Bartholow	dayle.bartholow@fairfaxcounty.gov	703-324-2338
L-Z	Yvonne Ta	yvonne.ta@fairfaxcounty.gov	703-279-8230

Opportunities to Help

Bilingual Volunteers Needed

Do you speak another language? Bilingual volunteers are needed to help older adults who feel lonely or need groceries and transportation. Language instructors are also needed in Fairfax County senior centers. Form a new connection and make a difference!



Go to bit.ly/bilingualVS to learn more about volunteer language needs or for information on Volunteer Solutions, a Department of Family Services program.

Email VolunteerSolutions@FairfaxCounty.gov or call [703-324-5406](tel:703-324-5406) with

questions.

Volunteer to Teach Kids About Staying Safe

Are you available on weekdays during school hours? Do you enjoy working with kids? If so, this opportunity is for you! The Department of Family Services' **Body Safety Program** needs volunteer classroom instructors to help empower elementary students with the tools they need to prevent or interrupt child abuse. Apply online at bit.ly/BodySafeVol or contact the Body Safety staff at DFSBodySafety@FairfaxCounty.gov or [703-324-7459](tel:703-324-7459). We continuously onboard volunteers throughout the school year, but help us reach our goal of 30 new volunteers! The next training is on Friday, August 8th.

Would you like to make a difference in a young child's life?

Are you available on the weekends? The Fairfax County Department of Family Services' BeFriend-A-Child program may be your opportunity. You can work around your schedule to spend time with your mentee. Build social skills and increase a child's self-esteem while preventing child abuse and neglect through fun activities. Mentors are needed now! The next training for new mentors will take place on Saturday, July 12th, from 12 pm-3 pm. Go to bit.ly/DFSBAC for more information.



Enjoying Spring? Let's Refresh Your Finances (and Maybe Still Tackle That Closet!)

Hello everyone! We hope you're all enjoying spring! The gardens are in bloom, the weather is getting warmer, and hopefully, you've had a chance to soak up some of this lovely spring.

While you might have already tackled some spring cleaning, extending that refreshing energy to your financial life is never too late. Think of it as a continued effort to ensure everything is in order and running smoothly.

Speaking of tidying up, we know many of you might still have those piles of documents containing sensitive personal information that you've been meaning to deal with. Instead of letting them gather dust (or worse, putting them at risk), we want to remind you about our upcoming free **Shred Events!**

Wednesday, May 7, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at our Lake Ridge Branch

Wednesday, May 28, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at our Sterling Branch

You can watch for announcements on additional events and our website for specific dates, times, and locations. These events offer a secure and convenient way for you to finally dispose of those old bank statements, tax returns, medical bills, and any other documents containing personal details. It's a fantastic opportunity to declutter your space and provide ongoing protection against potential identity theft – a win-win as we move further into the season!

Beyond the physical realm, May is also a perfect time to refresh your awareness of online safety. The digital world constantly evolves, and staying informed about potential risks is always wise. That's why we want to highlight the valuable resources available on our [Fraud Prevention Center](#) on the Apple Federal Credit Union website.

Consider our Fraud Prevention Center your always-available guide to navigating the digital landscape safely. You'll find a wealth of updated information on a wide range of topics, including:

- **Current Scams:** Stay informed about fraudsters' latest tactics, from evolving phishing schemes to new twists on familiar scams.
- **Ongoing Protection Tips:** Reinforce your knowledge of best practices for safeguarding your personal and financial information online and in the real world.
- **Helpful How-To Guides:** Access clear instructions on maintaining strong online security habits, like updating passwords and recognizing suspicious activity.
- **Travel Safety:** Get valuable tips on protecting your finances while traveling, including using credit and debit cards securely, being cautious with public Wi-Fi, and what to do if your cards are lost or stolen while away from home.
- **What to Do If You Suspect Fraud:** If you have concerns about potential fraud, reacquaint yourself with the immediate steps to take.

Taking moments to revisit [Apple's Fraud Prevention Center](#) is a proactive step towards maintaining your peace of mind. It's about staying informed and empowered with the tools you need to navigate the digital world confidently, no matter the season.

So, as you continue to enjoy the beauty of spring, remember to also focus on your financial well-being. Wishing you all a wonderful and secure spring!

Your friends at Apple Federal Credit Union

Sad News

Paulette Whiteside departed this life and entered eternal rest on Sunday, December 19, 2021. Paulette retired from the County in

2019.

Obituary

Board Room Dedicated to Paulette



Michele Mathews Leber, 82, entered Heaven on January 1, 2021, at her home in Arlington, Virginia. Michelle retired from the County in 2004

Obituary

David Alan Williams, 74, of Edinburg, passed away on Sunday, February 23, 2025. David retired from the County in 2001.

Obituary



Woodrow (Buddy) Buckley passed away peacefully at 80 on Sunday, March 16, 2025, at Mary Washington Hospital in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Buddy retired from the County in December of 1994

Obituary

Jane Tankersley Copeland, formerly of Centreville, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., passed away on Saturday, February 15, 2025, at 83. Jane retired from the County in 2001. [Obituary](#)



FCREA

Membership

Membership Application Membership Facts

New Members

- Charles D. “Chuck” Berlin, Retired from Family Services on 2/28/2023
- Gina Lori Jackson. Retired from the Health Dept. on 12/31/2024



Members, we have lost track of...

If anyone knows any of these members, please remind them to update their address by contacting FCREA99@gmail.com or Bobbie Deegan at [301-937-7070](tel:301-937-7070) or BobbieDeegan@aol.com.

- Joan Braxton, Retired from Parks in 2002
- Maxine Coleman, Retired from Human Services in 2001
- Sarah Cox, Retired from the Sheriff in 1998
- Mary Dargusch, Retired from Fire & Rescue
- William Hines, Retired in 2000
- Faye Manchester, Retired from Finance in 2004

2025 FCREA Events

FCREA will hold its 2025 Annual Meeting via Zoom on Wednesday, May 7, at 10 am. If interested in joining, please click on this link a few minutes early:

[Zoom Meeting link](#)

FCREA Picnic mid-September DTBD

FCREA Holiday Luncheon, December 17 at 11:30

Members Information

FCREA Board Members

FCREA retirees are asked to forward any news concerning retirees or their family members who are ill or have passed away to Joyce Gerhart: [703-560-4785](tel:703-560-4785) or ggerhart2@verizon.net

Please send address changes to Bobbie Deegan: BobbieDeegan@aol.com or [301-937-7070](tel:301-937-7070)

FCREA Website

Fairfax County Websites with Retirees Information:

[Retirement Systems](#)

[Retirement Web Member Services](#)

[Retirees Benefits](#)

[HR- Who to Call Contacts](#) (go to [Know Who to Call](#) link)

[Retirees Resource and Video Library](#)

Finally... Natures Engineers

The fastest animal on Earth, the peregrine falcon, can reach 400 km/h (250 mph) speeds in a dive without suffering from air pressure effects. The secret lies in a small bone in its nose called "tubercles," which regulates airflow and protects its breathing.

This natural adaptation didn't go unnoticed—modern aeronautical engineers used it as inspiration to improve aircraft engine efficiency and stability. Even the sleek design of the B-2 stealth bomber, a billion-dollar marvel, was influenced by the falcon's aerodynamic efficiency. Nature's



engineering continues to shape human
innovation in ways we never imagined.

[View as Webpage](#)

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