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Gary & Diana Ditto's Newsletter

Fall 2025

The Kensington Volunteer Fire Department Centennial Celebration!

By Antoinette Kranenburg

Come out to celebrate the 100th anniversary of our dedicated Kensington Volunteer Fire Department (KVFD), one of the oldest and most cherished institutions in town.

In January, KVFD's centennial events kicked off with a fascinating talk by KVFD historian, Juan Bofill, at Kensington Historical Society, about the earliest years of fire fighting in Kensington. Visit kvfd.org/history/ For Montgomery Municipal Cable's video recording of Bofill's excellent presentation.

When Kensington was incorporated in 1894, the town had unpaved roads, well water, no public sewer system, no electricity, and no fire department. Townspeople organized "bucket brigades" to combat occasional fires.

On October 26, 1899, around 6 a.m., a large fire was discovered in the Press Building. The fire spread to Town Hall, then housed in a commercial building with a grocery store and pharmacy. The Press Building and Town Hall were destroyed; only a piano was saved. Mrs. Brown's millinery store was covered with wet blankets and spared.

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KVFD historic fire truck, Labor Day Parade 2025

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—KVFD 100 continued

Cornelius Clum, owner and publisher of the Montgomery County Press, called for action. That night at the Noyes Library townspeople elected Leslie W. Maxson chief of the Kensington Fire Company.

In 1922, friction with the Town government about use of the fire truck for training and outside town limits led Eugene J.C. Raney, joined by others, to form a separate company.

They purchased a Dodge truck from Reed Brothers in Rockville. Jacobs Brothers in Gaithersburg fit a custom fire body to the truck. To raise money, the volunteers held carnivals.

Relations with the Town Council improved, and the Fire Department was incorporated in 1925. After years of planning and saving, property was bought at the corner of what is now Connecticut Avenue and Plyers Mill Road. In 1946 the cornerstone was laid and the new firehouse opened: Old Town Kensington Station 5.

Development boomed after World War II. Three additional fire houses were opened to serve the fast-growing surrounding area: Station 18 Glenmont, in 1953 at Georgia Avenue and Mason Street; Station 21 The Village, in 1962, at Veirs Mill and Gaynor Roads; and Station 25 Aspen Hill, in 1978, at Connecticut Avenue and Bel Pre Road.

Today the KVFD is one of the largest volunteer fire departments in Montgomery County and Maryland, and handles about 21,000 calls for emergency service a year.

Recently, when severe heart palpitations woke a neighbor up before dawn, she called 911. "Within five minutes, a team was at my house!" They were able to get a rhythm in the ambulance, so she was able to be diagnosed. Though living by herself, she feels safe and cared for, thanks to the prompt and expert response.

A range of community events like summer movie nights, chili cook-offs, Santa's fire truck neighborhood visit, and more, raise community spirit as well as funds for up-to-date equipment and training.

Come out to celebrate and support our Kensington Volunteer Fire Department!

Looking for a Book Club?

At the Kensington Row Book Shop, 3786 Howard Avenue, on the second Wednesday of the month, the **Pop Culture Book Club** meets at 6:30 p.m. Reach out to kensingtonpopbook@gmail.com for more information and to join the email list.

The **History Book Club** meets there at 7–8:30 p.m. for lively discussion. Call history book club leader Irene Kelly with questions (301) 564-0146.

November 12: *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion* by Edward J. Larson. 2020 edition

December 10: *Muse of Fire: World War I as Seen through the Lives of the Soldier Poets* by Michael Korda.

KVFD 100 Anniversary Events!



Saturday, October 4, 11 a.m.–4 p.m. special KVFD Open House at the Kensington Armory, with demonstrations by firefighters and emergency medical services, free blood pressure checks, CPR training, a Fire Safety Bounce House and other fun events for kids, along with live music and food trucks.

12 p.m. the **Fire Truck Pull, Competition** Teams of ten will compete to pull a 24-ton fire truck for 100 feet!

2 p.m. **KVFD 1925–Today, presentation by historian Juan Bofill.**

3:30 p.m. Re-dedication of the plaque marking the location of the original KVFD quarters.

Saturday, October 11, 1–4 p.m. Antique Fire Truck Parade, Party, and Muster.

1–1:30 p.m. Antique fire trucks parade through Kensington, followed by the Antique Fire Truck Muster at Kensington Cabin Park. The trucks will be on display starting at 1:30 p.m. with fire safety demonstrations, activities for kids, live music, and food trucks.

4 p.m. award ceremony

On Monday, October 13, at 9 a.m. the annual Golf Tournament at the Leisure World Golf Course gets a shotgun start. The tournament format is 18-hole scramble. Golf cart, gift, lunch, and prizes are included. Register to play at givebutter.com/PlayGolf.



The Woman's Club of Chevy Chase

7931 Connecticut Avenue

Friday, October 31 & Saturday, November 1, 4–8 p.m.

Mystery Mansion Adventure is a family friendly haunted house experience ideal for ages 3 to 10. Parents are encouraged; adult haunted house fans are welcome!

Your ticket includes: timed entry to the unique halls of Mystery Mansion; the chance to meet characters and snap photos in the Hall of Portraits; crafting in Artisan Alley; and fire pits for roasting s'mores. Food and drinks, including s'mores kits, are available for purchase.

Please note: no strollers are permitted due to tight spaces. Avoid disappointment and purchase your tickets in advance at MysteryMansion.org.

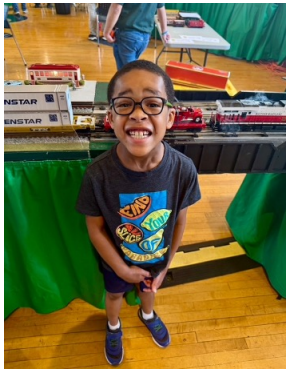


Smiles, laughter, and giggles filled Town Hall as tots and teens delighted in the fast choo-choo trains, while parents happily watched. Old fashioned trains clickety-clacked along the track, making lots of noise, and mesmerizing children of all ages.

The Orleans Express, led by John Stewart, had people tapping their toes to 1930s jazz tunes. The Kensington Historical Society joyfully shared town history, while the volunteers from the Noyes Children's Library Foundation sold many colorful T-shirts. At a low table, wooden trains cruised along the tracks propelled by our youngest train trackers, and the scavenger hunt was hit.

The heart and soul of the annual Kensington Train Show is the National Capital Trackers. Members drive from parts far and wide, to spend the weekend keeping the trains moving. This is their labor of love, as it is for Matthew Dodd, who regaled young and old with popular train songs and stories from the days of building the Transcontinental railroad across our country. Troup 439 kept folks well fed with hot dogs and other treats.

Enjoy a delightful short video of the Kensington Train at www.youtube.com/watch?v=nEZo5QBS8E4.



For Oakland Terrace third grader, Mason Gregory and his family it was their first visit. Mason was back with his Dad on Sunday. He noticed all kinds of trains: "One was half CSX and half Chessy system!" Mason already looks forward to the next Kensington Train Show on September 12 and 13, 2026, the weekend after Labor Day!

NeedleChasers of Chevy Chase Quilt Show

Kensington Town Hall
Friday, October 10, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.
Saturday, October 11, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

A biennial celebration of quilting, with over 200 quilts and fiber art pieces on display! Shop the Artisan Boutique and Buy-it-Now Sale for beautiful one-of-a-kind gifts. Admission \$5. Visit needlechasers.org for inspiration.



Coming up in Kensington:

Sat. Oct 4 –KVFD Fire Truck Pull & Open House
Sat. Oct 4 –Rock Creek Palisades Fall Fest 3-7 p.m.
Sat. Oct 11 –KVFD 100 Parade, Party, and Muster 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Fri Oct 24 –Architectural Tour Cedar Lane UUC 6-8 p.m.
We Nov 26 –Thanksgiving Dance the Nighthawks 7-11 p.m.
Fri. Dec 5 –Light Up KTown, 6:30 p.m.



Cedar Lane UUC Renewed

In 2024, Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Congregation completed a major renovation of its striking home. The large-scale transformation thoughtfully preserved the iconic mid-century modern architecture and reflects the congregation's commitment to inclusion.

Improvements include fully accessible entrances, gender-inclusive restrooms, updated common areas, and even better acoustics

Cedar Lane continues its long tradition of being a welcoming and inclusive hub for the Bethesda and Kensington communities. Programs includes a monthly parent's-night-in with childcare. Sunday worship happens at 10:30AM alongside youth makerspaces, faith formation, concerts, and social justice work.

The light-filled, renovated spaces are ideal for life events, workshops, and community gatherings and available through Rentals at Cedar Lane.

All are welcome at the **Architectural Tour of Cedar Lane, Friday, October 24, 6 p.m.** guided by renovation task force co-chair **Mary Means**, and planner and preservationist **Gwen Wright**. Light appetizers and drinks are provided. Register at <https://qrs.ly/rhl16op>.

Visit cedarlane.org for events, programs, or rentals.

On Stage at Kensington Town Hall:



Robin Hood and the Babes in the Wood A Pantomime

December 5, 2025–January 10, 2026

Visit BritishPlayers.org for tickets and more.

The Gary & Diana Ditto's Newsletter is mailed to over 10,000 households in our community. **Do you have an article or event you would like included in the next issue? Please let us know before February 1, 2026.** The editor is Antoinette Kranenburg of Kensington.



*Want to prevent injury, improve balance?
Stress less and enjoy more?*
Contact Antoinette at 240-762-9755 or
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