

Our Town

EVERYTHING ALEXANDRIA, CRYSTAL CITY AND SHIRLINGTON

Business Profiles

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Tiny Tots

Remember that terrific Our Town cover with the caption, “Our Town’s Littlest Stars”? Well, those charming little stars came, compliments of their parents of course, but also of the Tiny Tots Playroom at 1500 King St. in Old Town, Alexandria.

The owners, Jerry and Susan Pnevmatikatos have been taking care of tiny tots (up to 12 years old) for more than 10 years. Their business is so trusted and respected that they’ve opened three other locations: one in Arlington; one in Mt. Vernon; and the third (Bluebird of Alexandria) is on Commerce St. in Old Town.

So if you want to take a tour of the nicest day school in Our Town, Tiny Tots is open for tours from 8:00 – 4:00, Monday through Friday. I received such a tour on Wednesday, and I can tell you that it was extremely impressive! In one large room an instructor was taking a group of children through some very fluid yet gentle exercises. The children responded verbally with great enthusiasm. It all looked like a lot of fun! And imagine being able to associate exercise with fun from a very young age!

The next large room was the Infant Room, where at least 5 or 6 young women in their early 20’s were caring for the infants, many of whom were enjoying their little nap times. Just as many were up and cooing, “Take my picture please!” Actually, I’m an expert at baby talk (from watching all those “Look Who’s Talking” movies), so I actually can interpret most non-yelling baby talk! But you’ll just have to take my word for it. . . .

Anyway, I was more than happy to oblige with the help of the Tiny Tot’s care providers, and I have to say that these fine ladies are absolutely terrific with the children. In fact, “loving” may not be the politically correct term for the pervading attitude of Tiny Tot’s staff, but it’s the best word I can find to describe them, so loving it is!

My spirits were good when I arrived to take the photographs. However, I assure you that they were soaring when I left a little while later. We all want to know that our little ones and grandones are in skilled and caring hands, so that blessed with this knowledge, we can all have truly wonderful days.

Well, I left Tiny Tots that morning and went on to have a lengthy meeting with customers, even stopping at the Café Italia for their new all-you-can-eat Italian Buffet. While dining I had a brief conversation with Solomon, the Café Italia's owner, and then went back to work. At 4 p.m. I decided to grab a café latte at the Uptowner Café on King Street. Directly in front of the Uptowner was a group of Tiny Tots' little stars returning from their afternoon walk, soon to be reunited with their moms and dads.

I quickly grabbed my camera and took some great shots of these little guys and gals!. Of course, I now have permission to do just that, and it is a privilege of the highest order! If my son were still a tiny tot, this is where he would be. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend Tiny Tots to anyone. It's an extraordinary organization!

Maid to Clean

We have a policy at Our Town, unwritten as it may be. We write more about what we have directly experienced, and very little about what we haven't. That being said, I asked Cinderella at Maid to Clean (most folks call her Cindy) to clean my house, so I could honestly vouch for the quality of their service.

Since I have been in the remodeling service for many years, I had my group make the house as dusty and grimy as possible in order to make this a fair test. Of course I'm kidding! But the place was actually pretty dusty, due to all the dry wall dust and dust from cutting wood. Yes, when it's 30 degrees outside, carpenters tend to bring the saws inside for cutting. Believe me, it leaves quite a mess.

At any rate, Cindy's crew (she has 35 housekeepers altogether) did an excellent job cleaning, and they were 100% professional. I personally can't imagine getting anything that clean, but they did a marvelous job. I therefore fully intend to continue using Maid to Clean to really impress my customers after each of my home improvement projects are completed.

Equally important to the high quality of their cleaning was the fact that the crew showed up exactly when they said they would. Maid to Clean works strictly around their customers' schedules, and all their housekeepers are bonded and insured. They function as a team, led by a supervisor who has been with the firm for some time, to ensure that their cleaning project runs smoothly and efficiently.

Besides being available to all of Our Town residents, Maid to Clean serves most of Washington, DC and Arlington as well. They are located at the corner of Glebe & Russell Roads, and all of the staff are extremely friendly and accommodating. P.S.: If you decide to use their services, tell them Terry sent you!

Walk-in Medical Care P.C.

We finally have a doctor's office in Del Ray! Whew, it's about time I mean, Del Ray is the hottest thing since bell bottom pants, right?

Bell bottom pants? Is this guy really that old? Okay, so there are actually few of us left who still remember bell bottoms. I digress. But Del Ray is hot, hot, hot — and absolutely nobody can debate that!

So let's get on with the business of Del Ray's first medical practice in the area for as long as I can remember (1986, to be exact). Drs. Arshad and Yasmin Cheema's office — Walk-In Medical Care P.C. — is located on Mt. Vernon Avenue, two doors down from the Del Ray Post Office and directly across the street from One Call Pest Mgt. (one of our favorite advertisers).. You can actually kill two bugs now, just by crossing the street. But of course our good doctors will only treat the flu bug and similar pests, not termites.

So, here's the scoop on Dr. Arshad Cheema and his lovely wife, Dr. Yasmin Cheema, both board-certified M.D.s specializing in adult and children's illnesses (and they also have offices in Falls Church and Herndon). I had the pleasure of being one of their first Del Ray patients, and I was so glad that I went to see them.

I had been struggling with asthma and a combination cold for a few days and was completely out of medicine. Being quite busy like all of us, I just didn't want to take the time to go to the doctor's office. Then I saw Dr. Cheema's office with an "Open" sign on the door plus a sign above: "Walk In Medical Care". So yes, you guessed it: I walked right in!

I was immediately greeted by a warm hello from both Dr. Cheema and his nurse. Literally, within 15 minutes, I had my asthma spray and a prescription for an antibiotic as well!

Much to my surprise, Dr. Cheema also draws blood on the premises. Since I have an iron overload disposition (hemochromatosis), I am now fortunate to have a new and much closer place to have my blood work done. I've often been told the advantage of having a walk-in doctor's office, but once I had access, it didn't take me long to figure it out! It goes like this: When you are feeling really sick, you want to see a doctor today, not in three weeks or even three days. Walk In Medical Care is the definitely the ideal place to visit for immediate medical assistance.

Now with a total of three locations, Drs. Yasmin and Arshad have tremendously successful medical practices. They both are trained and licensed in pediatric and adult medicine, and they have accumulated years of experience in their practices.

But equal to their medical practices, I think most Our Towner's would agree, is the manner in which patients are treated by the doctors and their staff. I give Walk-In Medical Care 5 stars on all counts.

Welcome, Drs. Arshad and Yasmin Cheema! Welcome to Del Ray – Welcome to Our Town!

Nuggets Of Knowledge

If I had a dollar for every time that a person has come into my jewelry store, The Nugget, in the past thirtythree years and asked me to verify a stone from one of their trips out of the country, I would be retired and living in Tuscany! For example, on one Saturday, four people came in to the store, and each had a stone during a trip to South America. They were all told that the stone they were purchasing was an aquamarine. I tested the refractive index of each stone and had to inform them that, unfortunately, only one of them had an aquamarine. The other three had purchased blue topaz, blue spinel and blue glass.

Unfortunately, all light blue stones are not aquamarine and all dealers in gemstones overseas are not reputable. The overseas dealers also have the added advantage that very few people, when they are informed that they purchased something that wasn't genuine, are either too embarrassed to complain, or decide it just isn't worth the effort to try to get their money back. Even jewelers who go on buying trips overseas can be tricked or cheated in their purchases, because some testing equipment is very costly to transport with you, or may not be allowed to travel with you, as some tests require chemicals which would not be allowed by the current airport travel rules for traveling.

It is becoming more and more difficult with all the new technology that is available to treat stones with to really know what you are buying. Full disclosure is essential to require from those who sell you anything that costs more than what a souvenir might. My advice to travelers is, either know your meat or know your butcher. If you are not a GIA trained Gemologist, traveling with your own portable gem lab, you are definitely in a buyer beware position. This is especially true when traveling to South American countries. These countries are rich in gems and minerals, especially Emerald, Amethyst, Citrine, Aquamarine, Precious Topaz, and Ametrine (a combination of Amethyst and Citrine). The Emerald market was turned upside down about ten years ago due to the use of a material called Opticon which had been used in emeralds to treat seal fractures, without disclosing this to the gem purchasers.

Treating gemstones has always been done. In fact, during the time of Marco Polo, there are records of "heat treating sapphires" to improve their color. Many of these age old treatments are acceptable, just as it is acceptable to store opals in virgin olive oil to keep them from drying out, and to oil treat emeralds when they are mined, as there are natural oils and water in the earth from which they were mined, and to deprive these minerals from oil once they are unearthed could simply lead to the stones drying out and cracking. What is not acceptable is to color the oil which is used to treat the stones. Dealers who are not reputable will use green colored oil to "treat the emeralds", and if they do this treatment and do not disclose that they have done this, it is again a buyer beware situation. Gemologists know how to look for these kinds of treatments when examining emeralds prior to purchasing them, but innocent travelers do not.

There are also many laboratory grown stones which are true synthetics. By definition, a synthetic gemstone has all the same chemical and physical properties as the natural stone, except it has been grown in a laboratory, not by "Mother Nature." There are synthetic diamonds, emeralds, rubies, sapphires, tanzanites, amethysts, citrines, as well as many other gemstones. Some of the synthetic stones, such as synthetic emeralds, are grown with varying numbers of inclusions also, so just because a stone has eye visible flaws, do not assume that the stone is genuine. Also, the age of a stone is not always a defining

factor, since synthetic rubies and sapphires were developed in the late 1800's. These synthetic sapphires and rubies were set in many platinum and diamond pieces, especially during the Art Deco period in the 1930's. So, just because the ruby ring came from your grandmother's time is no guarantee that the ruby is genuine.

In the 1960's, General Electric developed and "grew" the first synthetic diamonds. Scientists in Russia, the USA and Japan are still working on perfecting various processes of growing a synthetic diamond. Crystal growing of diamonds in Russia was impaired by the frequent power interruptions, which interfered with the growth of diamond crystals. Now, many Russian and American scientists are working in labs in Florida universities trying to perfect the technique of growing synthetic diamonds. These stones have been useful for scientific and military purposes more so than for the jewelry trade. However, this is changing, and recently a company called Gemesis has been trying to develop a market for the synthetic fancy orange color diamonds that their company has produced.

This article is meant to alert you as a consumer, and not to alarm you. Knowledge is the key to all things, and my hope is that by imparting some gemstone information to this readership, there will be fewer travelers who are "scammed" when they go on their Caribbean cruises or their business travels. After thirty years in business at The Nugget, I've heard many a sad tale of purchases which went wrong overseas. I hope that by sharing a few "nuggets of knowledge", you will be spared those kind of experiences.

Mary Ehlers is the owner of The Nugget, located at 123 S. Fairfax St., Old Town, Alexandria, 703-548-3010.

Is Your Dog Walking You?

One of the complaints I hear most often from dog owners is that their dog does not walk nicely on leash. While it may be bothersome for pet owners who have a 10 pound miniature poodle, it's frustrating and can be unsafe for an owner of a 75 pound bouncing lab!

Here are some tips to help you shape your canine friend into an enjoyable walking partner.

- Reward your dog when he walks politely by your side. If your dog is behaving well, and you want him to continue this acceptable conduct in the future, you must remember to reward him for good behavior, and at least let him know when he is doing what you expect from him.
- If your dog tries to pull ahead while you are on a walk, simply stop! Don't encourage his efforts by following his lead. Instead, begin walking in the opposite direction and try to get your dog to follow along. Call his name when you switch directions, and when your dog catches up, reward him with an appreciative, "Good Boy!" (or girl).
- In order to get your dog to respond to your vocal commands, you must first practice getting your dog's

attention. If he starts pulling to get at something that is momentarily more exciting to him than you are, this is your cue to step it up a notch, and show your dog how fun you are! Try engaging in play while on your walks. Show your dog that walking with you can be an enjoyable experience, and he will be less likely to insist on roaming wherever he wants to.

- Teach your dog basic skills he will need on a normal walk, including how to greet strangers, both human and canine. It's not enough to teach your dog what not to do. You must teach him what you would like him to do instead before you can expect your dog to act appropriately. If you don't want your dog to lunge and pull when he sees a stranger, you must first show him how you want him to greet new people. Begin by instructing him to sit, make sure he remains patiently by your side, and let him greet the person when you give him permission.
- If you feel you need assistance in the training process, there are tools out there to help you. If you decide to purchase training tools, keep in mind these are designed to help you manage your training regiment, so do not expect the products to immediately fix the problem on their own. The following are examples of products on the market to assist you in dog training. The SENSE-ible Dog Harness is not like any regular dog harness. It is specifically designed to control your dog's shoulders, reducing his pulling strength. Another popular product is the Gentle Leader, a head collar that is designed to control the dog's head. With both products, your dog's body will follow where the head and shoulders lead. Both of these tools are designed to help you keep your dog's movements under better control, so you can spend more time enjoying a walk outside, instead of worry about where your dog wants to go.

Now that spring is upon us, it is a perfect time to get outdoors and start putting some of these tips to good use. If you start to feel like you need a little extra help, I offer a one hour hands on seminar, specifically designed for you to practice some of these looseleash walking strategies with your dog. Nothing beats the feeling of being able to enjoy a good walk along side a wellbehaved dog.

To submit comments or article ideas, you can email Tammy@FurGetMeNot.com

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