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CITY COUNCILMAN JOHN CHAPMAN CELEBRATES MOTHER'S DAY: THE WOMEN WHO'VE INFLUENCED HIM

By Jacqueline Burrell

Sitting quietly at the back of many a community meeting when he was young, listening as his grandmother and mother addressed the many tough issues of the day, City Councilman John Chapman credits the women in his life for instilling in him the need to see and understand what community means.

Saluting his grandmother, Ollie Taylor and his mother, **Michelle Taylor**, Chapman notes their incredible work ethic, one of many traits he's inherited. Working multiple jobs, they still managed to organize gatherings, seeing who in the community needed what, but more importantly, addressing the why of gaps, of service, of that need. His wife, Jennifer (a wonderful mother, he says), offers those same traits. Soon, their 13-month-old son, John, Jr. will be sitting in on community meetings, just as he did, listening to the issues of the day.



“Pretty powerful stuff for me to internalize and learn,” he says during a recent interview with the Concerned Citizens Network of Alexandria (CCNA), to celebrate Mother's Day.

Any quibbles about his upbringing – he gets jokes about attending private school – he says: “You have to take that up with my mom.”

She understood the need for educational equity, which is why Chapman strongly supported former school board member Gwendolyn Hubbard Lewis' founding of CCNA in 2009, together with many other community members.

Alexandria's lone high school, T.C. Williams, had the second highest dropout rate in Northern Virginia. It also ranked near the bottom of the list of “Lowest Performing Schools” in the entire state of Virginia.

Chapman joined forces with CCNA to work on solutions.

“I’d be remiss not to mention **Gwendolyn H. Lewis and Gwendolyn Day-Fuller**. Both are incredible forces, bringing a legacy of serving the community and creating opportunities. These incredible women and mothers should be celebrated all year long for the work they do.



I know I’m leaving so many out, but all of these very special women helped to build something that has grown the community. Many have such an empathetic heart when it comes to policy making. Part of it is their willingness to listen, which is vital and something I try to do as well. But the bottom line is our community enjoys a legacy of women leadership, many of whom are also great mothers.”

Many like his grandmother and mother, following their passion, just want to help, to be of service.

“That’s my goal as well. As City Councilman, there are multiple issues, such as educational equity, affordable housing, transportation, economic development and critically important now, COVID-19 that I’m currently working on and making progress. I want to continue those efforts and more. I want to be of service to the community.”

With his signature wide smile, the Councilman ended the interview, offering: “Again, I salute ALL the **great mothers** who do so much for so many. **Thank you!**”