

Hi Neighbor!



Newsletter for friends and neighbors of the Rock Creek Woods, MD community

Our annual Labor Day picnic



Our new neighbors' love story

We welcome Ian McCaleb, his daughter Kenzie, Noieeda Akram, and her son Erin to 4019 Ingersol Drive. Ian was in London on extended business in July 2017, when he met Noieeda on an online dating app. The two corresponded online for two weeks but were unable to meet until the evening before Ian's return flight to Washington. The hastily arranged first meeting took place at the centrally located Liverpool Street British National Rail Services Station, followed by a three-hour dinner at Yauatcha City, a Chinese restaurant in Broadgate Circle. The two parted ways after dinner, each knowing they had met somebody special. Two weeks later, Noieeda flew to Washington and the couple began seeing each other every three months, rotating between Ian's high-rise apartment in Silver Spring and Wanstead, East London. Noieeda was born and raised in London; Ian was born in Cambridge, MA, and was raised in both metro Boston and metro New York. While a 22-month separation during the COVID pandemic tested their patience, it further strengthened their bond, and when US travel restrictions were lifted, Noieeda secured a K-1 (fiancée) visa, and along with son Erin, moved in with Ian and Kenzie. The K-1 visa requires that Noieeda marry within 90 days of her late September US arrival. They have locked November 16th as their date at the Montgomery Circuit Court in Rockville.

After graduation from George Mason University, Ian began a 20-year career as a journalist, first with United Press International, where he covered the US House of Representatives. Then he became a Managing Editor of the Raleigh NC *News and Observer*, before returning to Washington to work for the *Congressional Quarterly*, and from there to CNN, where he covered the 2000 election. After 9/11, Ian was sought by the Fox News, where he covered Federal law enforcement, the intelligence community, and national defense. He also contributed to the coverage of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars as Senior Pentagon Producer. Ian went on to serve for one year as Senior Spokesman at the US Department of Justice, and from there five years at the Defense Intelligence Agency. In March of 2022, Ian started a consulting service called *Blue Highway Advisory* offering media plans and strategic advice for high stakes campaigns and investigations, support litigation or to help defuse crisis matters, such the creator's rights of composers, recording artists, filmmakers, and authors.



Noieeda, while in London, taught English and "teaching principles" for 10 years as a program manager to adults in Further Education programs. In 2002, she put this aside to work as Business Manager for the Fulham dental practices of her two brothers. Looking ahead after marriage, Noieeda would like to become a hypnotherapist, opening her own practice in due course. She studied hypnotherapy at Queen Mary's University in London and plans to take courses here. Her son Erin, 16, will enter Montgomery College next January. She has three other children who remain in the UK: Azeem, 31, is a law graduate who is now a strategic business manager; Zayyan, 27, was a history major who now works in recruitment, and the second-youngest, Aiden, 20, is studying physics at the University of Glasgow. Ian's daughter Kenzie is a first-year student at Montgomery College – Tom Klein

Levinson-Keyne family back after world tour years



We left Rock Creek Woods in September 2017 for an adventure around the world. We didn't anticipate a return to Maryland to let alone Rickover Road! But here we are back where we started. We're thrilled to be home and look forward to reconnecting with former neighbors and meeting new ones. -- Renana, John, Ayla, Davi, Bella, and Spruce (our dog and cat)

In love with chestnuts

One of Italy's ancient foods, chestnuts have been part of the cuisine since the time of the Roman Empire and a mainstay during times of food scarcity. Mildly sweet and starchy, the little nuts pack tons of nutrition into a small package; they're high in vitamin C, antioxidants, and minerals such as potassium, magnesium, and iron.



Italians love chestnuts - we have them every winter, especially at Christmas – but growing up in NYC, fresh ones were generally limited to Italian imports, which were always a bit past their prime and moldy inside by December. The Chestnut Blight of the early 1900s devastated the American Chestnut, *Castanea dentata*, and efforts to hybridize trees with resistant Asian varieties (from whence came the disease) have been ongoing since the 1930s. Italians love growing their own produce, but chestnuts take a lot of patience and years of waiting for the trees to mature to the point of producing flowers. Flower spikes have both male and female flowers, but they are said to not self-pollinate and require another tree nearby to cross pollinate via wind. Despite this my father managed to find what I think might have been a Chinese chestnut tree and waited for his chestnuts to materialize.

In September of 1985, Dad's tree was loaded with prickly chestnut pods which would have matured and fallen on their own soon after, requiring him to stay one step ahead of the squirrels if he wanted to get any harvest. Luckily (?) Hurricane Gloria intervened. On September 27, the hurricane hit the south shore of Long Island with a large eye and 85 mph winds. The eye would pass right over our house around noon. My father outfitted me with heavy leather work gloves and a leaf bag, and when the winds suddenly died, we ran out to collect all the chestnut pods that had blown off the tree. I think we filled at least one big bag with pods before having to run back inside as the other side of the eyewall hit us. This was his best haul of chestnuts since the squirrels didn't have the first pick. My father died on September 26, 2013, 28 years (minus one day) after that storm. I was gifted two hybrid trees (whose genetics I don't know) in 2014 to plant in my yard as the Vinnie Toscano memorial chestnut grove.

It took seven years for any pods to form on one tree, with the first ones showing up in 2021, producing only a handful of full-sized nuts. Last year only one pod formed and that produced no useful nuts at all. The tree had many flowers, so this was a big disappointment.

Finally, numerous pods filled the same tree this year, and in late September they started opening and dropping nice big nuts! I was determined to thwart the squirrels, so I made sure to go outside several times a day to comb the grass for these precious morsels. It occurred to me that if any of my neighbors were watching, they would (justifiably) think I was behaving eccentrically, but it was totally necessary! In the end, I got about three dozen, which compared to five in 2021 and none in 2022, was a good number. It was the best way to commemorate the 10th anniversary of my father's death.



Chestnuts are available now at the Kensington Farmer's market. If you get some, prepare them by first cutting a long horizontal gash across one side of each shell, then roast them for about 25-30 minutes at 425-450F. Nuts will split open along the gashes as they cook. When done, immediately turn them into a kitchen towel, roll them up and let them steam a bit as they cool to make them easier to peel. A good tip if you want to have them for Christmas is to buy them now when they are fresh, roast them, and freeze the roasted nuts until ready to eat them. Thaw and microwave warm.

More info on American Chestnut trees (do not confuse with poisonous horse chestnuts):

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/inside-fs/delivering-mission/sustain/scientists-work-create-blight-resistant-chestnut-hopes>

-- Maggie Toscano