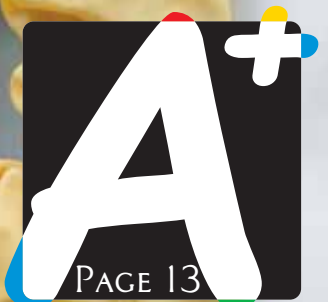


While enjoying the 9th Annual Asian Festival at George Mason University with her father, 4-year-old Sofia DuJardin of Fairfax dances along with some of the Nepalese performers. In today's Connection, we begin an ongoing series on immigration and diversity in Fairfax County. During the next month, we explore the ways immigrants have impacted the county, with a particular emphasis on faith, politics, education and culture.



Finding Home in Fairfax County

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Mason Enterprise Center Expands

Ribbon cutting for updated facilities in Fairfax.

BY ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

All throughout election season, the public was bombarded with ads criticizing the “other side” for being anti-small business, and not doing enough to encourage the growth of entrepreneurship. If the pols and pundits had bothered to cast an eye toward the City of Fairfax, they would have found the Mason Enterprise Center Fairfax (MECFairfax), a model incubator for the development and expansion of successful businesses.

The MECFairfax has been supporting and mentoring small business owners for more than 17 years. On Wednesday, Nov. 14, the staff hosted a well-attended ribbon cutting ceremony and open house to celebrate the recently completed remodeling and expansion of their facility at 4031 University Drive. The renovations began in May, doubling the size of the main conference room and adding updates like LCD monitors in all conference space, and additional copy/printing stations to the 29,000-plus square foot complex, which includes a professional reception area, 79 offices, an impressive mail room, and a variety of comfortable café and break spots.

THE FIRST FLOOR is home to the center’s main conference room, but also houses the offices of the George Mason University employees who operate the MECFairfax as well as the resources of an integrated network of programs like the Virginia Small Business Development Center, the Procurement Technical Assistance Program, the Mentor-Protégé Program, and the International Business Development Program. “There’s a real brain trust within these walls,” said Jody Keenan, managing director of the MEC in Fairfax. “And access to all these people and all these resources is readily available and included in the cost of office space rental here at the MEC.” About 33 companies currently reside at the center, renting one or more office units; 51 companies are “virtual” tenants. “They may just need a physical address, someplace to send mail, along with access to our support personnel. They can use conference space or meet with clients here. Whatever they need,” said Keenan. Hundreds have come through over the years. According to Keenan, the goal is to assist the fledgling company as it stabilizes and then grows. “Hopefully, they will outgrow us,” admitted Keenan.

MediaForce, the PR firm that handled the press material for the MECFairfax’s open house is one such graduate. “I started with one office here in 2005,” said founder and President Robert Gaudian. “One day I looked around and realized we were kind of crammed in 11 offices. Time to move on. What a wonderful complaint.” The perfect scenario, MediaForce is now located just two blocks away, keeping their business local.

Keith B. Segerson, executive director of the Mason Enterprise Center Network, which includes locations in Leesburg, Manassas, Spotsylvania, Springfield and Woodbridge in addition to the Fairfax center, opened



GMU Professor Roger Stough, GMU President Dr. Angel Cabrera, City of Fairfax Mayor Scott Silverthorne and Mason Enterprise Center Network Executive Director Keith Segerson make it official, cutting the ribbon to launch the renovated facility.

PHOTOS BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION



Mason Enterprise Center Managing Director Jody Keenan answers questions from guests as she leads a tour of the recently renovated facility. “We can support new and growing business at every stage,” declared Keenan, “from planning, to capitalization, marketing, IT solutions and more.”



The MECFairfax hosted their own (and much friendlier) version of the TV reality show “Shark Tank.” Anne Rosenblum meets with “sharks” Scott Gorvett, Neil Agate and Bob Smith. Karen Sorber, owner of Micronic Technologies has some questions for the volunteer panel.

the ribbon cutting ceremony. MECFairfax Director Judy Barral added her welcome to the assembly, and thanked all of the event’s sponsors.

VIEWPOINTS

What Are You Thankful for on this Thanksgiving Day?

— MARY WITKO



Del. Dave Albo, (R-42), Fairfax Station:

“Every Thanksgiving my Dad says his famous quote, ‘If you were born in America and had a parent that loved you, you hit the lottery in life and should never ask for anything again.’ So that’s what I am thankful for. I am thankful that I grew up in West Springfield and had parents that loved me.”

John Chahine, owner and general manager of Paisano’s Burke, Burke

“The one thing I am truly thankful for is family. My family took a big risk one year ago by supporting me in opening... I have worked very hard to make sure our business will succeed. Since day one, my family has supported me through the stressful times and the good times. They are always there for me.”



Lauren Seger, student, George Mason University, Fairfax

“This Thanksgiving, I am especially thankful for my family—going to college has made me miss them more than I ever thought I would. I’m so glad I have them around to help me grow and provide me with unconditional love.”



Rabbi Bruce Aft, Adat Reyim Congregation, Springfield

“As leader of this congregation, I’m thankful for the devotion of a group of energetic young people who want to create an active spiritual community here.”



The Furlow Family (Londonn and Bryce, students; Chechena, real estate agent; Jerome, budget analyst), Lorton

Londonn: “I am thankful for my parents, my grandma, my house, my big brother who helps me with my homework, and the food God puts on our table.”

Bryce: “I am thankful for my parents, my home, my clothes, the school I go to and the food on our table.”

Chechena: “I am thankful to God that I have my mom home with me and my family for the holidays after a terrible fall where she broke her nose and had to have surgery.”

Jerome: “I am thankful for my loving family and for all the blessings that God gives us and the fact that we all will be together on Thanksgiving.”



Stephanie Lauria, student, South County Secondary School, Springfield

“It may sound cliché, but I truly am thankful for every single aspect of my life... from my family and friends to my experiences and opportunities. Life truly is a gift, and it’s hard not to be thankful for it.”





Santa Claus wraps up the first trip on the 495 Express Lanes on the new Westpark Drive bridge Friday, Nov. 16. The lanes opened to the public Saturday, Nov. 17, providing a new alternative for Beltway drivers.



Gov. Robert McDonnell cuts the ribbon on the 495 Express Lanes Tuesday, Nov. 13 at the Sheraton Tysons.

PHOTOS BY ALEX McVEIGH/THE CONNECTION

New 495 Express Lanes Open for Business

Fourteen mile stretch of tolled lanes open from Dulles Toll Road to Springfield.

BY ALEX McVEIGH
THE CONNECTION

The 495 Express lanes opened to traffic in the early morning hours of Saturday, Nov. 17, marking the completion of a project more than 10 years and \$2 billion in the making. The project adds two toll lanes on 14 miles of the Beltway in Virginia, in an effort to ease the road's traffic congestion.

"As this area, the economic engine of the state, continues to grow, the infrastructure has to keep up with that, and today is another sign we're willing to meet that challenge," said Gov. Robert McDonnell at the opening event Tuesday, Nov. 13 in Tysons Corner. "This project has pumped billions of dollars into the economy and put thousands of people to work, and hopefully it will begin to undo some of the gridlock in this area and give travelers a new choice."

The 14-mile stretch of express lanes starts just north of the Dulles Toll Road exit and goes south to the Springfield Interchange. Heading south, exits are at the Dulles Toll Road, Jones Branch Drive, Westpark Drive, Route 123, Route 7, Route 66, Lee Highway, Gallows Road and Braddock Road.

Several Tysons exits, such as Jones Branch Drive and Westpark Drive, are open only to express lanes users in order to allow drivers to access parts of Tysons Corner without using Route 123 or Route 7.

"On a Saturday, without rush hour traffic, that's the clear advantage of the lanes, that I could take Braddock Road right to the Westpark exit and get to the mall parking lot without going on any major roads," said Steve Smith of Springfield. "Coming from Braddock on a Saturday afternoon, I



The 495 Express Lanes opened Saturday, Nov. 17, providing two new toll lanes over 14 miles of the Beltway from the Dulles Toll Road to Springfield.

think I paid about \$1.20, \$1.30, something like that, which wasn't bad. If it's a weekday rush hour and that rises to \$3 or more, I'm not sure if I'd be willing to do that though."

On Monday, Nov. 19, at 9 a.m., traffic was flowing at a steady rate through the Beltway at almost the same rate as the weekend, and the rate for going the full length of the lanes cost \$1.65.

The price will range from 20 cents per mile to \$1.25 per mile depending on congestion. Officials estimate the average toll would be between \$3 and \$6, but it could be as more than \$15 if traffic is bad.

Speaking at the Nov. 13 opening event, Supervisor Jeff McKay (D-Lee) said it only took his trip from his district to the Tysons Corner Sheraton to show why this project was needed.

"When I took the Beltway just this morning, it was a reinforcement that it shouldn't take an hour to get from Springfield to

Tysons Corner, and with this project open, I know it won't take an hour," he said.

THE EXPRESS LANES PRICE can change as quickly as every 15 minutes, as an algorithm will determine when to raise and lower the price. According to the I-95 Exit Guide website, which ranks traffic in real time on a scale of green (moving freely), yellow, red and black (at a virtual standstill), the Beltway was green over the weekend, and a complete trip across the 14 miles of express lanes cost around \$1.65. Drivers with three or more people in the car will not be tolled, if they acquire the new EZ Pass Flex and use it on HOV mode.

The project was built using private and public funds, with \$588 million coming from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act loan program, \$300 million in other federal aid and \$600 million in private activity bonds. The Virginia Department of Transportation and Capital Beltway Express will fund the remainder of the project.

ment of Transportation and Capital Beltway Express will fund the remainder of the project.

"These public-private partnerships hold the key to leveraging scarce resources at the state level for major transportation projects," McDonnell said.

"You see pavement, I see jobs. We all know road construction does a lot of good when it comes to putting people back to work," he said. "During the heart of this economic crisis over the last four years, the 495 Express Lanes project pumped more than \$3.5 billion into Virginia's economy, and put more small businesses and women- and minority-owned businesses to work than any other transportation project in the history of Virginia."

U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly also gave credit to past officials in the creation of the express lanes. "Three governors ... have worked hard to make today happen, as well as lots of local and state officials across party lines to create a new model for creating infrastructure in Virginia," Connolly said. "This project was also able to get funds to repair 58 bridges and ramps approved in an ancillary part of this project, \$300 million that we couldn't afford in the public sector."

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR Victor Mendez said the effects of the project will reach much farther than just the areas surrounding the Beltway.

"The impact that this project will have is not just the commonwealth, but the entire capital region. People all over the country are looking at this, because it is the model of what could happen around the entire nation," he said. "Transportation is supposed to connect people, places and economies, but we're also looking for new ways to make those connections better."

More information on the 495 Express Lanes, including past and present toll rates and live traffic footage of current Beltway conditions, can be found at www.495expresslanes.com.

NEWS

Bibliophiles Rejoice

Richard Byrd Library Book Sale a holiday bestseller.

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION

Booklovers, bargain hunters and holiday shoppers will find the perfect gift for everyone on their holiday list at the annual Richard Byrd Library holiday book sale beginning Thursday, Nov. 29.

With more than 10,000 books to sell, and more coming in, the sale is one of the largest used book sales in the area.

"Our children's books are overflowing," said Christine Peterson, president of the Friends of Richard Byrd Library, the non-profit fundraising arm of the library. "We have everything from board books for toddlers to the Hunger Games Trilogy and everything in between. Prices start at twenty-five cents so this is the perfect place to shop if you are a parent, grandparent or teacher."

"We received an amazing variety of donated books last year, and many are almost new, so they make great stocking stuffers and gifts," she said.

Peterson said the book selection includes every conceivable genre—from history, art and foreign language to medical science and science fiction—including rare, vintage and autographed books.

For adults, this year's sale includes a special-collection donation from an Auschwitz survivor, which adds to the sale's military history offerings of 500-plus books. Peterson said craft books, art and photography books and cook books are always bestsellers.

"And we have more fiction than you can imagine.

Greenspring Donates 800 Turkeys With Funds Raised From 10th Annual Turkey Trot

On Friday, Nov. 16, Greenspring residents and staff participated in the retirement community's 10th Annual Turkey Trot, raising money to provide Thanksgiving turkeys to area families in need. Greenspring's wellness and fitness staff organize the event each year, which continues to grow annually, according to Greenspring Wellness Manager Brad Hibbs.

"So many of the residents recognize that they are fortunate and are willing to help," said Hibbs. "They are incredibly generous."

Four Washington, D.C.-area mission organizations are receiving turkeys from Greenspring this year including SOME (So Others Might Eat), Central Union Mission, Gospel Rescue Ministries, and Southeast White House.

Representatives from each of the organizations joined residents and staff at the event, and expressed their appreciation for the generosity shown. "Thank you for spreading the love and joy of Thanksgiving," said Greg Chudy, donation coordinator for SOME.

This year, Greenspring raised enough funds to purchase and donate 800 turkeys, totaling nearly 1800 lbs. and surpassing last year's donation of 700 turkeys. About 75 residents and staff participated in the one-mile walk for the Turkey Trot, while many others made monetary donations.

More information about Greenspring can be found at www.ericksonliving.com.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Christine Peterson, president of the Friends of the Richard Byrd Library, displays crates with some of the more than 10,000 book donations the library has received this year for its annual holiday sale.

THE RICHARD BYRD LIBRARY BOOK SALE

Where: The Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce Street, Springfield

When:

Thursday Nov. 29 from 3-9 p.m.

Friday, Nov. 30 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 1 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sunday, Dec. 2 from noon to 3 p.m. (Bag Sale)

Most fiction and nonfiction is from \$1 to 3. Wrapped all together—lots of selection, great prices, excellent quality and all for a good cause—your library," Peterson said.

"This sale is a real community effort," Peterson said.



Residents participating in the one-mile Turkey Trot walk.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



From left, Wellness Manager Brad Hibbs, Wellness Coordinator Juanita Kuntz, Fitness Specialist Marla Masakayan, and Fitness Specialist Sandy Latta.

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* With coupon, not valid with any other offer, one per person per visit.

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Claire is a gorgeous blonde lady with a very outgoing personality. She's the life of the party and is always ready for some fun. She's a mix of Golden Retriever and Yellow Lab with the best traits from each breed. She will be a year old in October. She's housebroken and good with other dogs after a short meet and greet. This beautiful girl may be the best

companion you've ever had, so get your application in now before she's someone else's Best Friend Forever!

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OPINION

Diversity Growing

This week, the Connection kicks off a series about immigration, diversity and the growing population of foreign-born residents in Fairfax County. County reporter Victoria Ross opens with a story that captures vignettes and statistics of the changing population.

It is a topic consistent with the original Thanksgiving story.

More than 28 percent of Fairfax County's population is foreign born; that's 317,000 residents.

Consider Yesuf Beshir from Ethiopia, who two years ago settled in Springfield and now works for a government contractor. In May, he became an American citizen. "The main thing here is democracy, the right to vote," Beshir said.

These residents include nearly 20,000 who are self-employed business owners, truly job creators, large and small. One of these is Shami Walia who emigrated from India in 1982, and now owns Burke Cigar Shop, a popular cigar lounge that's become a neighborhood fixture. One part of our series will look at the business impacts of the foreign-born population.

Fairfax County Public Schools are harbingers of change: 38,760 Fairfax County elementary school students, that is 44 percent of all elementary school students in public schools here, spoke a language other than English at home as of May 2009. And between them, they speak more than 100 different languages. Another part of our series will look at the challenges and opportunities in Fairfax County Public Schools.

Consider Hutchison Elementary in Herndon, where 63 percent of students have limited English. And Crestwood Elementary in Springfield, where 68 percent of students have limited English.

At Lynbrook Elementary, also in Springfield, 74 percent of students have limited English. At Mount Vernon Woods, in Mount Vernon, 52 percent of students have limited English. At Dogwood Elementary in Reston, 56 percent of students have limited English.

Tune in and let us know what you think.

You can submit a letter to the editor at connectionnewspapers.com/contact/letter/

— MARY KIMM,

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Be Part of Children's Connection

During the last week of each year, The Connection devotes its entire issue to the creativity of local students and children. The results are always remarkable. It is a keepsake edition for many families.

We publish artwork, poetry, essays, creative writing, opinion pieces, short stories, photography, photos of sculpture or gardens or other creative efforts.

We ask that all submissions be digital so they can be sent through email or delivered on CD or flash drive. Writing should be submitted in rich text format (.rtf). Artwork should be photographed or scanned and provided in jpeg format.

Identify each piece of writing or art, including the student's full name, age, grade and town of residence, plus the name of the school, name of teacher and town of school location. Please provide the submissions by Monday, Dec. 3.

Some suggestions:

Drawings or paintings or photographs of your family, friends, pets or some favorite activity. These should be photographed or

Tune in to our series on immigration.

scanned and submitted in jpeg format.

Short answers (50 to 100 words) to some of the following questions: If you could give your parents any gift that didn't cost money what would that gift be? What are you most looking forward to in the upcoming year? What is one thing that you would change about school? What do you want to be when you grow up? What is your favorite animal? What is your favorite toy? What makes a good parent? What makes a good friend? What is the best or worst thing that ever happened to you? What is the best gift you've ever given? Ever received?

Your opinion (50 to 100 words) about traffic, sports, restaurants, video games, toys, trends, etc.

Poetry or other creative writing.

Opinion pieces about family, friends, movies, traffic, sports, food, video games, toys, trends, etc.

News stories from school newspapers.

We welcome contributions from families, public and private schools, individuals and homeschoolers.

Email submissions for the Vienna/Oakton, McLean, Great Falls, Reston and Oak Hill/Herndon Children's Connections to kemal@connectionnewspapers.com.

Email submissions for Springfield, Burke, Fairfax, Fairfax Station/Clifton/Lorton Connections to South@Connectionnewspapers.com.

To send CDs or flash drives containing artwork and typed, electronic submissions, mark them clearly by school and hometown and mail the CD to Children's Connection, 1606 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.

Please send all submissions by Dec. 3. The Children's Connection will publish the week of Dec. 27, 2012.

FOCUS ON IMMIGRATION

Embracing Our Diversity

BY U.S. REP. GERRY CONNOLLY (D-IL)

SPECIAL TO THE CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

If you can ever find the time to attend a federal naturalization ceremony in Fairfax County for new citizens, do it. It reinvigorates one's patriotism and reminds us all how lucky we are to be Americans.

I've participated in several of the large swearing in ceremonies that the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service holds each year in Fairfax. After leading the Pledge of Allegiance for the hundreds of newly-minted citizens and their proud families, I have the honor of addressing them about what it means to be an American.

I tell them that America, a country of immigrants, is a place of opportunity where you can pursue



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Connolly leads Pledge of Allegiance for new citizens.

your dreams and raise your families without fearing that somebody's government is going to tell you what to think, how to express yourself, what to believe, or how to worship. Too often, we take these rights for granted, but

many of our new neighbors do not.

These new citizens come to Fairfax from all over the world. Many come from places where they experienced violence or suppression of thought, or the suppression of their right to participate in their government. Many are professionals skilled in medicine, technology, and engineering, or entrepreneurs and small business owners who have worked hard and contributed to Northern Virginia's robust economy.

And when their day finally comes and they recite their Oath of Allegiance to earn the title "American citizen," their pride is palpable, the mood is festive, and the respect they show for their new flag and their new nation is inspiring.

The overall ceremony is an emotional and inspiring experience for everyone in the room, as small

children clutch American flags, spouses hug, and tears well in the eyes of many of the family members in attendance.

These new Americans have helped change the face of Fairfax County and the Northern Virginia region in many ways over the last three decades. The diversity of our residents has enriched the fabric of our society and their efforts have helped our economy grow. Today, Fairfax County has the second highest median family income in the nation, some of the best public schools in the nation, a quality of life second to none, and we continue to create jobs in the county at a rate that outpaces most other communities across the nation.

Here in Fairfax County we have embraced the benefits that diversity brings to our community, and we are better for it.

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NEWS

Put the Zip on Homelessness

Second Annual Jeans Day Campaign to End Homelessness launches.

The Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce (Fairfax Chamber), in partnership with the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness, The Connection Newspapers and Apple Federal Credit Union, has announced the 2nd Annual Jeans Day to Put the ZIP on Homelessness (<http://jeansday2012.eventbrite.com>).

On Jeans Day 2012—Friday, Dec. 14—businesses, county agencies, non-profit organizations and civic and faith-based groups in Northern Virginia will allow employees or members to wear jeans to work or gatherings in exchange for a \$5 contribution to End Homelessness. Last year, more than 100 employers, representing 3,000 employees, participated in the initiative.

Twenty-two organizations, representing nearly 2,000 employees, have already signed up to participate in Jeans Day 2012, including:

- ❖ City of Fairfax Regional Library
- ❖ CPS Professional Services, LLC
- ❖ Ernst & Young
- ❖ Fairfax County Department of Housing
- ❖ Fairfax County Department of Human Resources
- ❖ Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood & Community Services
- ❖ Fairfax County Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Court
- ❖ Fairfax County Office of the County Attorney
- ❖ Fairfax County Office to Prevent and End Homelessness
- ❖ Fairfax County Retirement Administration Agency
- ❖ Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board-Chantilly Center
- ❖ Helios HR
- ❖ Holland & Knight LLP
- ❖ The ILEX Group
- ❖ Kositzka, Wicks & Company
- ❖ M&T Bank

- ❖ The O'Reilly Law Firm
- ❖ Reston Association
- ❖ Steve Gladis Leadership Partners

❖ Tysons Corner Center
❖ Virginia Commerce Bank
❖ WSP Environment & Energy

"We're proud to partner with the county, through the Office to Prevent & End Homelessness, The Connection Newspapers and Apple Credit Union to provide an opportunity for businesses and their employees to participate in the robust work to end homelessness going on in our community," said Fairfax Chamber President & CEO Jim Corcoran. "Northern Virginia businesses step up every day to support our community in many ways, but we're especially excited about this opportunity because it's a chance for employees to get involved directly."

"Now, more than ever, we need you to get involved as we move forward with the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness. Everyone is in need of some type of help at one point in time or another. Now,

SEE JEANS DAY, PAGE 9

SOUTH COUNTY HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR

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Volunteers help in the Food for Others warehouse on Thursday afternoon.



LCAC Development Director Andrea Tracey stands behind a substantial food donation in the Lorton Community Action Center, where the food was housed prior to the opening of the warehouse.

Season of Giving Well Under Way

Local organizations “are dependent on the community.”

BY JENNIFER BENITZ
THE CONNECTION

As the holidays approach, the spirit of giving spreads throughout Fairfax County. Many organizations, such as Food for Others and the Lorton Community Action Center, make it their mission to distribute the necessary services to those who need them in their communities.

With its office and warehouse located in Fairfax, Food for Others provides food and related services for low-income individuals and families. Serving 250-300 families on a weekly basis at one of its 15 distribution sites and 1,600 families on a monthly basis through food banks, Food for Others is the largest food distributor in Northern Virginia.

Food for Others also provides an emergency referral program, monthly USDA Temporary Emergency Assistance packages and a weekend backpack program for children. While the number of people the organization serves is no longer at its peak, it is still much higher than before the economic downturn in 2008.

“Ninety percent of our food is donated,” said Jessica Cogen, director of development and outreach at Food for Others. “We have a lot of businesses, large and small, who donate, hold food drives and volunteer for us.”

FOOD FOR OTHERS receives food donations from large supermarkets such as Wegmans, Safeway, Whole Foods, Trader Joes and Giant to restaurants such as Panera. They rely heavily on its relationship with an area food bank in addition to receiving donations from community members and faith-based organizations who often donate non-perishable items and holiday baskets.

“We really need donated food,” said Executive Director Roxanne Rice. “We are dependent on the community and volunteers.”

About 1,600 families go to Food for Others at least once a month. “Last year, we



Food for Others Executive Director Roxanne Rice.

served about 40,000 individuals in Fairfax County,” said Rice. “Some came once a month; others came more often.”

As one of the areas with the highest cost of living in the United States, Fairfax County is often regarded as an affluent area, with little regards to poverty or the need for assistance. According to the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, however, about 62,000 Fairfax County residents live in poverty—a number higher than any other jurisdiction in Virginia.

“Our plans are to make sure we are serving the greatest need,” said Rice. “Anything these individuals don’t have to spend on food, they can spend on rent and other necessities.”

Less than 30 miles away from the Food For Others warehouse is Lorton Community Action Center (LCAC) with a similar perspective. LCAC has been serving the community for over 35 years and continues to expand with the belief that food is a major influence in preventing homelessness and eviction. “If we can help with food, then we can offset costs for their limited income,” said Andrea Tracey, development director at LCAC. “That’s a good thing.”

UNLIKE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS in

the area, however, LCAC provides more than food distribution. “Our mission here is to enhance the quality of life through the services we provide as well as partnerships,” said Tracey. “We see our role as enhancing the community one person at a time.”

In addition, LCAC offers ongoing assistance and crisis intervention, English as a Second Language classes, one-on-one tutoring, an energy assistance program (EnergyShare) with its partnership with Dominion Virginia Power, clothing donations and recently launched an after-school program with transportation assistance.

Just like Food for Others, LCAC receives about a third of its food donations from large supermarkets like Giant and Wegmans while another third of its donations come from small area businesses such as a local yoga studio and Great Harvest Bread in Lorton and individuals. LCAC also has a long established relationship with its partner agency, Capital Area Food Bank.

Between July 2012 and September 2012, LCAC served 434 households, or roughly 1,565 individuals—a 43 percent increase than the same time period a year earlier. “The key thing is, these numbers are unduplicated,” said Tracey. “We only count each person once, whether they come once



Long-time Arlington resident Jessica Cogen is the director of development and outreach at Food for Others in Fairfax.

during those three months or every month.”

Both Food for Others and LCAC count on the generosity of the community, its residents and its businesses. They receive funding through monetary donations, grants and foundations, but are always in need of help. Help from the community can take the form of donations, both monetary and food, to volunteers for everything from distributing food to organizing the food pantries to holding food drives to putting together holiday packages.

For those interested in donating, Food for Others has a list of items needed on its website while LCAC has 412 households requesting Thanksgiving baskets, including 36 military families and 24 elderly or disabled adults. The opportunities to help organizations like Food for Others and LCAC are endless as they continue to strive for excellence in serving communities where the need for assistance remains high all year round.

“We are here to be someone’s shoulder to cry on and give them hope,” said Tracey. “We help people get through hard times and we couldn’t do it without the community. That’s for sure.”

For more information, visit www.foodforothers.org or www.lortonaction.org.

NEWS

Jeans Day

FROM PAGE 7

we need your help, and Jeans Day is a great way for you and your business to get involved to prevent and end homelessness in our community as we know it," said Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova.

"In Fairfax County, it's easy to forget that there are homeless families here, homeless children in the schools, and that many people who are homeless here are actually working, but don't make nearly enough money to afford housing," said The Connection Publisher Mary Kimm. "The Connection is committed to raising awareness of homelessness and the need to provide permanent shelter, and to recognizing the good works of individuals and businesses in Northern Virginia."

Nearly 3,000 children, women and men face homelessness and the threat of severe temperatures and hunger today in the Fairfax County-Falls Church community. The majority of people without homes in our community are children and working families. Homelessness affects everyone, with social and economic costs to the community, including increased public costs for medical care and education.

Interested organizations can register to participate in the initiative any time between now and Dec. 14, and can do so at <http://jeansday2012.eventbrite.com>.

More information about homelessness in Fairfax County, and the partnership to end it, is available at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/homeless/>

Fairfax County NAACP Branch Elects New President

Campaigning on the platform, "A New Beginning," Shirley Ginwright was elected president of the Fairfax County Branch of the NAACP. Ginwright pledged to increase membership, membership participation, civic engagement, and community involvement.

Ginwright is a long-time civil rights activist. She was instrumental in the revitalization of Fairfax County Women in the NAACP (WIN) and resides in Mason Neck, Va.

Elected executive committee officers include Ralph Cooper Jr., first vice-president; Cynthia Colton, second vice-president; Michael Everett, secretary; and Muriel Brown, assistant treasurer.

Did you know?

60% of adults in families that were homeless were employed



Put the ZIP on Homelessness by wearing jeans December 14 in exchange for a \$5 contribution to the Fairfax-Falls Church Partnership to Prevent & End Homelessness.

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In 2011, more than 100 employers representing 3,000 employees participated in this community-wide give-back initiative. Help us boost those numbers in 2012!



Tony, formerly of TJ's Barber Shop, has relocated to Fairfax.

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Every year between Christmas and New Year's, The Burke Connection turns its pages over to the contributions of local students. We are seeking artwork, photography, poetry, opinions, short stories and reflections. We welcome contributions from public schools, private schools and students who are home schooled.

E-mail to: ChildrensSouth@connectionnewspapers.com, or mail (.jpg and text files on disc only) by Dec. 5, to 1606 King St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Please be sure to include the student's name, age, grade, school and town of residence along with each submission. For information, call 703-778-9410.



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FOCUS ON IMMIGRATION

Finding a Home in Fairfax County

Fairfax County has become an immigrant gateway—a place immigrants choose as their destination.

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION

Part one of an ongoing series.

Yesuf Beshir spent nearly three years gathering the mountain of paperwork he needed to leave Ethiopia and emigrate to America. Two years ago, he settled in Springfield and now works as a government contractor. In May, he became an American citizen.

“The main thing here is democracy, the right to vote,” Beshir said. “You can be what you want in America. You can be president. If you want to be a doctor, you can be a doctor. I tell my daughter that the possibilities in America are endless.”

Shahinaz Hassan of Fairfax, originally from Egypt, also became an American citizen in May. “I am happy for today. Everything gets easier here,” she said.

In 1982, Shami Walia emigrated from India. He was 18 years old, and worked in “every job you can think of” all over Northern Virginia. “I didn’t have anything when I came here, but I worked hard.” He now owns Burke Cigar Shop, a popular cigar lounge that’s become a neighborhood fixture.

Rosemary Osei came to Centreville in 2000 from Ghana. The 22-year-old voted in her first presidential election this month, and works as a special needs teacher in Vienna.

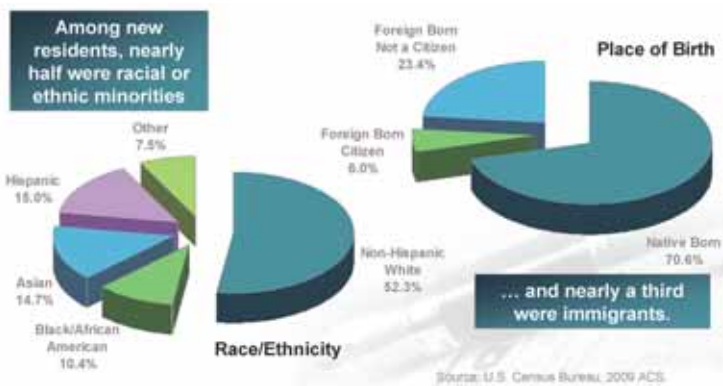
Srikanth Ramachandran came to America 14 years ago from India. In 2002, he founded the Fairfax-based Multivision IT company; by 2007 the company employed 200 people and had \$32 million in sales.

Andy Ton came from Vietnam. He now owns Andy’s Barbershop in Vienna, where customers line up out the door on the weekends. Del. Mark Keam (D-35), the first Korean American and the first Asian-born immigrant to serve in the Virginia General Assembly, is one of his regular customers.

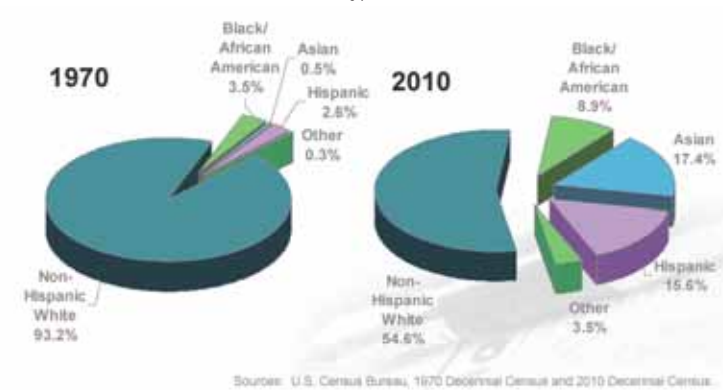
Individually, immigrants bring their own talents, culture, hopes, fears, sorrows, skills and needs. Collectively, they have permanently altered the fabric of Fairfax County.

In the span of one generation, Fairfax County has seen an explo-

Residents Who Moved to Fairfax County During 2009



Population by Race/Ethnicity Fairfax County, 1970 and 2010



sion in its immigrant population. In 1970, more than 93 percent of Fairfax County’s population was white and middle-class. In the fall of 1970, a white 6-year-old child beginning elementary school in one of the county’s developing towns—Chantilly, McLean, Vienna, Herndon and Centreville (which did not yet have one major grocery store or drug store)—could look to his left, or look to his right, and see a classroom full of children who, at least 90 percent of the time, looked like him and who spoke English.

By 2010, a child entering elementary school in Fairfax County would almost certainly encounter a classmate who did not speak English as a primary language, and whose parents or grandparents immigrated from places such as Vietnam, India, Korea or a country in Africa.

According to the 2010 U.S. Decennial Census, more than 46 percent of the county’s population are of a racial or ethnic minority, and nearly a third are immigrants.

“I think the migrant population

is creating a richness and diversity and really enhancing our culture,” said Frederic Bemak, PhD, director of the Diversity Research and Action Center at George Mason University. He said residents notice changes in obvious ways and subtle ones.

“There’s a language change; there’s a cultural change; there’s a change as you walk down the street in the communities, there are changes in signs on the storefront because some of them are in different languages . . . or in churches, religious institutions. I hear it all day, ‘It’s not like it used to be.’ Well, it’s not, and that’s positive,” Bemak said.

In comparison—from 1990 to 2010—the United States doubled the number of migrants settling in America.

“By 2020—and this is astounding—the children and adolescents of migrants will comprise one third of the U.S. population... one third,” Bemak said. “People don’t know that, if we’re talking about children... that’s our future. And if that’s only 2020, imagine what

2040 be like.”

Bemak argues that a healthy process of acculturation and adjustment—when existing cultural features are combined, and new features are generated—is possible, but only when the non-immigrant culture reaches out.

“We know racism and discrimination have an impact on people’s mental health. We say ‘you’ve got to figure out how to be here,’ [The work] is simultaneously with the larger communities. . . . Those issues have to be attended to at the same time we help people adjust, adapt, acculturate,” Bemak said.

Bemak said he disliked the word “tolerance,” because it suggests that we’re just “tolerating” immigrants. “We need to respect and celebrate immigrants,” Bemak said.

Parents often notice the increasing inflow of diverse cultures at their children’s schools. Robert E. Lee High School in Springfield, for example, reflects the increasing diversity of the community in its student body. The school, which opened in 1958 with nearly all white students, now has students from 42 countries who speak more than 34 languages.

In the 2009-2010 school year, according to FCPS, Lee High School’s student body was slightly more than 30 percent white, 26 percent Asian, 24 percent Hispanic and about 16 percent black.

“Go to a high school graduation and listen to the names being read. It’s not just Smith and Jones anymore,” said Lee High School parent Paula Montero, who came with her parents from El Salvador when she was 6 years old.

Statistics show the breathtaking breadth of change in diversity and immigration in Northern Virginia:

◆ From 2000 until 2010, Fairfax County gained 91,165 immigrants. In 2010, Fairfax County had 237,677 foreign-born residents; in 2010, the number of foreign-born spiked to 328,842, according to the American Community Survey and the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2000 Decennial Census,

◆ Forty-four percent of Fairfax County elementary school students currently speak a language other than English at home. That’s nearly 40,000 students who go home to households that speak one of more than 100 languages.

◆ Among new residents who



Khatira Alvarez (left) of Springfield, and Laura Simon-Salzer of McLean, took the Oath of Allegiance and became naturalized American citizens at a ceremony on July 10, held in the Hayfield Secondary School auditorium.

PHOTO BY
DEB COBB/
THE CONNECTION

In Upcoming Weeks

During the next month, *The Connection* Newspapers will feature stories, viewpoints and columns about the significant impact immigrants have in Fairfax County.

◆ *Part II focuses on immigration and Fairfax*

County Public Schools;

◆ *Part III examines politics of immigration;*

◆ *Part IV explores the religious and cultural diversity immigrants bring to Fairfax County.*

We encourage your letters and thoughts as we explore this topic.

moved to the county in 2009, nearly half were racial or ethnic minorities, and nearly one-third were immigrants.

◆ In the decade from 1990 to 2000, the increase in the number of foreign born in Fairfax communities included: Centreville, 323 percent; Herndon, 168 percent; City of Fairfax, 88 percent, Springfield, 78 percent; Burke, 63 percent; and McLean, 10 percent.

◆ 19,301 (6.4 percent) immigrants in Fairfax County are self-employed business owners. This is higher than the 4.1 percent of self-employed business owners who are U.S.-born Americans.

Between 1990 and 2000, Fairfax County became an immigrant gateway—a place immigrants choose as their destination upon entering the United States, according to a 2006 Fairfax County demographic report. The trend continues. In 2010, Kiplinger called Fairfax County one of the nation’s top eight gateways for immigrants.

“Immigrants to this region come from nearly every country in the world, and some localities are home to people from more than 100 countries,” said Audrey Singer, a senior fellow in metropolitan policy at the Brookings Institution.

◆ When former Mayor Rob Lederer graduated high school, our minority population was just over 2 percent. When I graduated high school 10 years later, the minority population was 10 percent. Today, it’s 40 percent,” Silverthorne said, noting that in the Fairfax County school system, more than 100 languages are spoken. “I believe we have turned a blind eye to this trend.”

◆ Sharon Bulova, Fairfax County’s Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, has emphasized and celebrated Fairfax County’s diverse

their residents typically respond in one of two ways to newcomers: they either accommodate diversity or deflect immigrants through policies and procedures.

The rate and intensity of immigrants settling in Fairfax County have pushed community leaders to acknowledge the scope of diversity and address the benefits, as well as the challenges, created by the rapid influx of immigrants.

When R. Scott Silverthorne became the 10th person to serve as mayor of the City of Fairfax in June, he made diversity a talking point, promising to recognize and reflect the city’s growing diversity through representation on the city’s boards and committees.

“It’s no secret that our community continues to diversify,” Silverthorne said during his swearing-in ceremony.

◆ When former Mayor Rob Lederer graduated high school, our minority population was just over 2 percent. When I graduated high school 10 years later, the minority population was 10 percent. Today, it’s 40 percent,” Silverthorne said, noting that in the Fairfax County school system, more than 100 languages are spoken. “I believe we have turned a blind eye to this trend.”

◆ Sharon Bulova, Fairfax County’s Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, has emphasized and celebrated Fairfax County’s diverse

cultures in a number of ways. In 2009, she supported Filipino advocate Corazon Sandoval Foley’s efforts to organize and host the first Naturalization Ceremony in the Fairfax County Government Center.

“Everywhere you look, there are signs of diversity in our community,” Bulova said. “And it’s made us a richer, stronger place. It’s important that Fairfax County is recognized as a community that welcomes people from all backgrounds.”

One of the basic ways that Fairfax County reaches new immigrants is by publishing materials in languages other than English, tailored to specific immigrant communities. For example, the Fairfax County Guide to Emergency Preparedness, as well as many other county brochures, is available in six languages—English, Arabic, Farsi, Korean, Spanish and Vietnamese.

The growing immigration population in Fairfax County has presented some challenges. While the county’s “politics of place” may be welcoming, the realities of rapid change, in particular the challenges and issues low-income immigrants face, can be daunting.

◆ According to a 2006 study, “Unsettling Immigrant Geographies and the Politics of Scale,” the shifting of responsibility from the federal government to localities for the

A Way Out of No Way

Two women—one African-American and one from Africa—learn to see America through each other’s eyes.



PHOTO BY VICTORIA ROSS

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION

Lillie Reynolds and Rosemary Osei in Reston Town Center in November.

Rosemary Osei, 22, and Lillie Reynolds, 61, have been good friends for four years. The two women, who help teach special needs students at a Vienna elementary school, are sometimes mistaken for mother and daughter.

They bonded over their faith — both are devout Christians — and family values.

Recently, they attended a rally for President Obama at George Mason University. The 2012 presidential election was the first time Osei was exercising her right to vote as an American citizen, and Reynolds was proud of her.

“Voting is a powerful feeling,” Reynolds said. “It’s one of the best things about being an American.”

Although they have much in common, both women said they’ve learned important lessons from their differences.

“We both experience being Americans in different ways. Rosemary came here because she wanted to come here,” Reynolds said. “My family was brought here in chains. . . . We’ve both found a way out of no way.”

Osei spent the first 12 years of her life in Ghana. In 2003, she and her younger brother, Reuben, reunited with her family in Centreville. She became an American citizen on Aug. 25, 2012.

“In over nine years of living in the U.S., my proudest moment was on Nov. 6, 2012, when I waited in line for over an hour to help re-elect the president of the United States. I am now proud to say I am an American citizen.”

LIKE MANY IMMIGRANTS, Osei said she grew up seeing America as a land of wealth and opportunity. She said there was always a celebration when family friends would come back from America, because they brought armfuls of clothes, candy and toys. “It was something special and magical to me,” Osei said.

“Although I lived a comfortable life in Ghana, I believed that America would be a better place to live. To me America represents freedom and justice. Since the money is higher in America, I believed my family and I would become rich and have more money than we had in Ghana,” Osei said.

She said she was disheartened when — as a 7th grader at Liberty Elementary School — she did not receive the welcome she anticipated.

“In my country, when we saw white people, we welcomed them. We wanted them to think well of us and come back. I thought everyone would welcome me when I came here,” Osei said. Instead, Osei said she felt out of place “as though I didn’t belong because of the complexion of my skin color.” She said she often cried, and ate lunch in the school’s bathroom. Within a month, the 12-year-old yearned to return to Ghana.

“I wanted to go back ‘home’ to my friends. I was very unhappy because I wasn’t being welcomed and accepted for who I am as a person,” she said.

Reynolds said she understands that feeling all too well. She grew up in Mobile, Ala. in the 1950s and ‘60s, during state-sponsored segregation, a time when laws forced blacks and whites to use different drinking fountains, public parks, pools and transportation.

“I have a lot of friends from Africa. They didn’t understand why I was so excited to be voting for President Obama the first time. I had to explain to them that we didn’t always have the right to vote, and I didn’t think I’d live to see the day I could vote for a black man,” Reynolds said.

Reynolds said she remembers when she and her sister would walk to go shopping in downtown Mobile. “You could buy the clothes, but you couldn’t try them on because white people didn’t want to touch anything a black person wore,” she said.

Osei said it was eye opening to learn about the United States’ recent history of racial discrimination. “When Lillie tells me stories about growing up in America as a black girl in the ‘60s, it breaks my heart,” Osei said.

“It’s one thing to watch a movie on TV about how horrible African Americans were treated in the past, but it’s another thing to know someone who lived through those experience.

“I was in my 40s, my 40s,” Reynolds said, pausing, “before I stopped hating myself for being black.”

“My daddy was a smart man,” she said. “He was a lumber-checker, and he was really good at math. He did everybody’s taxes in our part of town. But he couldn’t ride in the front seat of a car with a white person or he’d get arrested. He was talked down to by white people, called ‘boy.’ . . . I always felt hurt and angry for him.”

Reynolds said her grandmother had a saying that stuck with her “She would say nobody is better than you and you’re no better than anybody else. My family was smart. I grew up strong in one way and beat down in another.”

“It took me to become an adult and to witness a black man become president of the United State of America before I could really feel proud about being an American,” said Reynolds. “And make no mistake about it, I am proud to be an American, and proud to live here.”

BOTH REYNOLDS AND OSEI said they like living in Fairfax County, where they get to experience the benefits of such a vibrant, diverse culture.

“I am proud of so many things now. It makes me proud of America for how far we, as people, have changed for the better,” Osei said. “Most of all I am proud of Lillie for not allowing her past experience turns her into a bitter person—an angry black woman—but instead she is a stronger, independent black woman, who treats everyone with respect.”

FOCUS ON IMMIGRATION

Fairfax Becomes Immigrants' Gateway

FROM PAGE 11

integration, assimilation and social welfare of immigrants has caused frustration and some resentment.

In Fairfax County, slightly more than half of those who are classified as "foreign born" live below the poverty line. Minority students, according to FCPS records, are less likely to graduate from high school on time. The on-time graduation rate for the class of 2010 was 95.6 percent for white students, 94.5 percent for Asian students, 87.5 percent for black students and 75.3 percent for Hispanic or Latino students. On the flip side, Asian students make up more than 60 percent of students

admitted through a rigorous admissions process to Fairfax County's elite magnet school, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology.

Immigrants are less likely to have health care coverage. Although immigrants comprise about 30 percent of the county's total population, they comprise 63.5 percent of the county's uninsured residents.

Immigrants are also more likely to experience housing discrimination. According to Fairfax County's Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs, the agency that enforces fair housing laws in the county, discrimination cases have been on the rise in Fairfax County in the past six years.

"Sadly, housing discrimination is alive and well and we've seen an uptick in complaints during the past six years," said Ken Saunders, executive director of Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs.

Although discrimination based on race remains an issue, Saunders reports that in recent years complaints received by his office are related to national origin or involve disability-related issues.

In contrast to national trends, discrimination based on nationality made up 25.6 percent of complaints from 2008 to 2010. In comparison, about 9 percent of complaints to HUD fall under this category. Discrimination complaints, Saunders said, are not filed by one particular group.

"It runs the gamut. We have complaints from Latin Americans, Asians and Pacific Islanders, individuals from the Continent of Africa," Saunders said. Saunders said Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs does a significant amount of education and outreach to communities with limited English proficiency, by hosting seminars aimed at various ethnic groups and by publishing and disseminating information in a number of languages.

VIBRANT CULTURE THROUGH IMMIGRATION

Most community leaders and residents in Fairfax County agree the benefits of diversity and immigration outweigh the challenges.

"Fairfax County is proud to be a community in which companies of all descriptions can and do succeed to a greater extent than in the rest of the region, the state or the country," said Gerald L. Gordon, president and CEO of the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority.

In September, the county was recognized as a successful market for minority-owned businesses in several national business publication rankings. Businesses owned by Hispanics, African-Americans and women generated nearly \$1 billion in revenue and



Frederic Bemak

PHOTO BY VICTORIA ROSS/THE CONNECTION

provided more than 1,000 jobs, according to the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority.

Eleven Fairfax County-based companies were among the 500 largest Hispanic-owned businesses in the nation based on revenue—more than the total in 40 states, according to HispanicBusiness.com.

The Fairfax County companies comprise 22 from Virginia on the 2012 Hispanic Business 500 list. In the Washington area, eight companies are from Maryland and two are from the District of Columbia.

Together these companies generated \$655 million in revenue and employed more than 3,000 workers in 2011, according to Hispanic Business.

CELEBRATING OTHER CULTURES

There are numerous ways to experience the cultural diversity of Fairfax County, but perhaps one of the most accessible is by attending one of the county's Naturalization Ceremonies.

"Immigrants bring talent and culture to our community in many ways, and make us who we are," said Bulova. "Every time I attend one of our Naturalization Ceremonies, I'm reminded of how important diversity is to Fairfax County."

On May 25, 2012, Bulova presented the Certificates of Naturalization to 75 new Americans in the Fairfax County Government Center. The board room was packed with immigrants and their families from every corner of the globe—Afghanistan, The Congo, Costa Rica, Burma, India, Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Malaysia, Morocco, Nepal, South Korea, the United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

"Some of you have endured hardships to arrive at this time and place," Bulova said in her remarks. "All of you have invested your time, money and efforts to become citizens. Many of you came here to escape war or endless poverty. . . . You who are here today now officially have a seat at that table."

Samuel DeVera, a captain with the county's Fire and Rescue Department and a member of the Fairfax County Asian American Firefighters' Association, gave the keynote address, telling the audience his personal story of coming to America from the Philippines when he was 14 years old in 1983. After becoming a paramedic in 1994, he received a Valor award and, in 2010, scored first on the test to become a captain with the Fire and Rescue Department.

"Look at me. The one thing I can say is work hard to make you and your families better," DeVera said. "If you're vice president of the company, aim to be president. I'm not here to encourage you; I want to challenge you."

The room was quiet when U.S. Rep Gerry Connolly (D-11) stepped to the podium.

"My fellow Americans," Connolly said with gravitas, pausing to let the meaning sink in. And when it did, 75 immigrants, who had just raised their right hand and taken the Oath of Allegiance to become American citizens, erupted with applause and tears, waving American flags and hugging family members.

"You now join us. . . . Every new wave of immigrants refreshes us, makes us stronger," Connolly said, leading the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.



BY ALEX MCVEIGH/THE CONNECTION

Ellen Graves leads newly naturalized citizens in the Pledge of Allegiance Saturday, Sept. 22 at Lake Anne.

VIEWPOINTS

Immigrants' Experiences: Becoming Americans

On Sept. 22 at the Multicultural Festival on Lake Anne Plaza in Reston, 25 people participated in a naturalization ceremony that made them American citizens. Some of them talk about how they came to the U.S. and why they chose to become citizens.

—AMIEE FREEMAN



PHOTOS BY AMIEE FREEMAN

Xiomara Artola, currently living in Woodbridge, originally from El Salvador

"Since I was 18 I had thought about becoming a citizen. But I was young then. I have lived here since kindergarten and I went to school here. Now that I am 23 I felt that it was time to complete the naturalization process."



Jose Zalles, currently living in Woodbridge, originally from Bolivia

"I came here as a very young person. My parents came here first and then I followed. I grew up here. My parents already spoke English. I never really felt the need to become a citizen until recently. During college I saw opportunities that were only available to citizens, so I thought it was time for me to become one."



Seung Il Kim, currently living in Falls Church, originally from South Korea

"This is really a very special event. I have been a member of the community for a long time, but not really. Until now I never had the rights or responsibilities of a citizen."



Bassam Ghazi, currently living in Ashburn, originally from Lebanon

"I came here on a visit 25 years ago and decided I would like to stay here. So, I got my green card. Now I will have time to travel and see more of the country."



Saaeddine Zaghbani, currently living in Burke, originally from Tunisia

"From today I can say I am an American citizen. It is a big honor. For me it is a great opportunity. I can live my dream. My first step as a citizen will be to vote freely. I have visited 47 countries, lived in five of them. Here is where I want to stay."

School Admissions: Interviews and Teacher Recommendations

Admissions officers at local schools offer insight into the application process.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Mark Fischer sat with his parents in the plush reception area of one of the region's elite independent schools, biting his fingernails and tapping his left foot while waiting to speak with an admissions officer for the interview portion of his application.

"Yeah, I'm a little nervous," he said.

Admissions directors say the interview is a chance for both students and their parents to get to know the schools and for the school to become familiar with the applicants. But what do admissions teams want to learn from interviews with applicants and their families?

"We really just want to get to know you better and hear what you have to say about your school year and thoughts for next year," said Ann Richardson Miller, director of admission and financial aid at The Madeira School in McLean.

"We like to see that the student is curious about life, what he or she is interested in and what they are passionate about," said Diane Dunning, director of admission and financial aid at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School in Alexandria.

Tim Simpson, director of admission and financial aid for Bullis School in Potomac, Md., adds that schools value sincerity. "Does the student talk about things that are important to them? Do they go into detail so that I don't have to dig? If I ask about a physics class, does the student go into detail about their own personal experience? It is always exciting for me to hear different layers of a student's experiences," he said.

COMPETITION TO GET INTO independent schools can be fierce — some school admissions teams accept only one out of every 10 applicants — so parents may wonder if they should hire education consultants or coaches to help their children prepare for interviews.

Mark Sklarow, executive director of the Independent Educational Consultants Association, says it's not worth it: "A school is trying to get ... an understanding of who that student really is," he said. "They'll try to get past any planned or scripted answers."

Richard Moss of The Heights School in Potomac agrees. "It is



Instructor Laura Hoffman teaches a science class at St. Andrew's Episcopal School in Potomac, Md. Independent school officials say interviews with applicants and their families help identify students who fit "the personality of the school."

often easy to tell when a student is not interested based on their knowledge of the school and the reasons for wanting to attend," he said. "The interview with the parents is important because you get a sense of the kinds of people you're going to be working with. We want to make sure our parents are on board with what our instructors are trying to do."

Admissions directors say parents often ask how their families should prepare for interviews. "This is an opportunity to soul search about why they are interested in the school," said Moss, adding he notices a lot about a prospective student during an interview. "Does a student present well? Does he look sharp? Does he have a firm handshake? Does he thank you for having him? Does he look alive and engaged? Does he mumble?"

WHAT ROLE do the teacher recommendations play in admissions decisions? "Teacher recommendations give us a broader perspective on student effort and attitude, and often provide us with a different perspective than what the application alone might show," Michael Cresson, director of admissions, Bishop O'Connell High School in Arlington.

"Families would be surprised by the thoughtful and insightful comments most teachers make on the recommendations," Miller said. "Trust the teachers. They have your child's best interest at heart."

Charlotte Nelsen, director of admission for the Potomac School in McLean said, "Potomac School takes a particular interest in the current teacher's recommendation

for the applicant. We recognize a teacher has known the student far longer than we have."

Some experts say that reports from a student's current instructors can raise red flags as well.

"The interviews and teacher recommendations offer multiple perspectives and wonderful opportunities to learn more about each applicant as part of the whole admission process."

— Julie Jameson, director of admission and financial aid at St. Andrew's Episcopal School in Potomac, Md.

"Teacher recommendations can shed light on the difficult aspects of a student's personality that you don't see on a report card," said Moss. "Report cards don't necessarily tell you how hard a student is working, how generous he is or what his true abilities are."

"We realize that teacher recommendations are subjective, but they are important," Moss continued. "If a student is required, for example, to get a recommendation from a current English teacher and they have a terrible relationship with that teacher ... they should ... ask the previous year's English

teacher to write a supplementary recommendation, just so they can balance out the negative one. The one thing you don't want to do is get a bad recommendation and say, 'Well this is a horrible teacher who doesn't like my son.'"

Julie Jameson, director of admission and financial aid at St. Andrew's Episcopal School in Potomac, concludes: "The interviews and teacher recommendations offer multiple perspectives and wonderful opportunities to learn more about each applicant as part of the whole admission process."

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Teaching Children to Help Prepare Thanksgiving Dinner

Local chefs share tips and culinary traditions.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Susan Limb recalls spending the Thanksgiving days of her childhood in the kitchen with her grandmother, mother and two sisters. The family's holiday ritual and the smell of a thyme- and butter-dressed turkey roasting in the oven are ingrained in her memory.

"We always had two huge turkeys because my mom always had a lot of people over for dinner," said the Potomac, Md., area mother and co-owner of Praline Bakery and Bistro in Bethesda, Md. "I am Korean-American, but we didn't have Korean food. We always had traditional green



PHOTO COURTESY OF PRALINE BAKERY & BISTRO

Susan Limb has fond memories of cooking on Thanksgiving Day. She now shares those traditions with her daughter.

beans, turkey, ham and mashed potatoes. My sisters and I always helped in the kitchen, and as our

skill level increased, we prepared more advanced dishes."

Limb, a former White House pastry chef, now includes her toddler Abigail in the Turkey Day meal prep. "She cracks eggs and they're not always perfect, but I don't criticize. Kids enjoy helping in the kitchen [and] want to feel like they've contributed," she said.

WHILE THANKSGIVING is often steeped in family culinary customs, preparing the meal can be a source of stress. Add eager children into the mix and the tension is likely to rattle even the steadiest of cooks. Local culinary experts, who are also parents, say that by deploying a few strategies, putting little ones to work in the kitchen on Thanksgiving can be fun, safe and stress-free for all.

Christine Wisniewski begins several days before the holiday. Her secret is planning. "Every year we sit down as a family and review the menu together," the Vienna-based mother and culinary instructor said. "Our menu never changes, but this simple little tradition builds anticipation."

Experts encourage parents to give children age-appropriate tasks. "Preschool kids can pick fresh herbs, such as mint, sage, thyme, and parsley," emailed Randy Johnston, a chef instructor at the International Culinary Schools at The Art Institute of Washington in Arlington. "Elementary kids can ... help tear the lettuce for the salad, toss the salad with the dressing, and also help decorate ... platters with vegetable garnishes and chopped herbs. Also, give the little chefs their own aprons and possibly little chefs' hats to make them feel engaged."

Holly Utt, a mother of two college-age sons and director of operations for Tiny Chefs cooking school, which offers classes in Arlington, Alexandria, McLean, Oakton and Springfield, and Potomac, Md., adds: "Kids can do more peeling than you can imagine, depending on their age, with supervision. Setting the table is always a great thing. Decorating the table is always fun."

Limb believes that meal preparation can give children a sense of accomplishment. She said, "I think it is important to get children involved with cooking. It's just a great memory."

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CALENDAR

To have community events listed, send to south@connectionnewspapers.com or call 703-778-9416 with questions. Deadline for calendar listings is two weeks prior to event.

TUESDAY/NOV. 27

Marc Leepson on Saving Monticello. 7 p.m., at the Kings Park Public Library, 9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke. Historian Marc Leepson talks on how Jeffersons' home was saved from wrack and ruin; book signing follows talk. www.fffairfaxcounty.gov/library.

SATURDAY/DEC. 1

VolRUNteer 5K and Fun Run. 9 a.m., at Fairfax Corner Shopping Center, 4100 Monument Drive, Fairfax. Run or walk to benefit Volunteer Fairfax's efforts to connect the skills and interests of volunteers and donors with local nonprofit needs; long sleeve t-shirt included. \$35; \$15 for youth 15-and-under; \$15 for 1K Fun Run (adults must be accompanying a child). www.volunteerfairfax.org.

Shop the Shepherd Christmas Showcase. 10 a.m.-3 p.m., at the Church of the Good Shepherd, 9350 Braddock Road, Burke. Enjoy holiday shopping in a festive market filled with crafts and gifts; jewelry, toys, handbags, home decor, kitchenware, skin care, decorations, a bakeshop and raffle are among the day's offerings. 703-323-5400 or jhwilcox@aol.com.

2012 Festival of Lights and Carols. 11 a.m.-7 p.m., 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. From lunch with Santa at Old Town Hall to holiday music, hot cider, s'mores, the Pender United Methodist Church Bell Ringers, caroling and bell ringing with the



Danú plays at the GMU Center for the Arts with a Christmas special on Saturday, Dec. 1

Christmas in Ireland: An Nollaig in Éirinn

On Saturday, Dec. 1, the spirited international traditional Celtic band Danú performs their Christmas special, "Christmas in Ireland: An Nollaig in Éirinn" at 8 p.m., at George Mason University's Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax.. \$23-46. 888-945-2468 or cfa.gmu.edu.

Jubil-Aires at Kitty Pozer Garden to the lighting of the Christmas tree, choral and band performances, and candlelit tours of Ratcliffe-Allison House at 7 p.m., the day is full of cheer. www.fairfaxva.gov.

Christmas in Ireland: An Nollaig in Éirinn. 8 p.m., at George Mason University's Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. A family friendly performance focusing on the Irish Christmas tradition of music

and song with Celtic instruments from the internationally celebrated band often broadcast on NPR, BBC and the like. \$23-46. 888-945-2468 or cfa.gmu.edu.

SUNDAY/DEC. 2

Sacred Carol Sing. 7-8 p.m., at Historic Chapel of Truro Anglican Church, 10520 Main Street, Fairfax. Jazz singer Juanita Williams and

saxophonist Matt Rogers will provide special music, with reception to follow. 703-273-1300 or www.truroanglican.com.

Chancel Choir Concert. 7:30 p.m., at the Fairfax United Methodist Church, 10300 Stratford Ave., Fairfax. The Christmas-themed portion of Handel's Messiah with a professional orchestra and singers; traditional carols follow the Hallelujah Chorus, with the audience invited to sing-along. 703-591-3120.

MONDAY/DEC. 3

Children's Music Performance Series. 10:30 a.m. Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. First and third Mondays of each month. Free admission. 703-352-2787 or www.fairfaxarts.org.

SATURDAY/DEC. 8

Second Saturday. 9 a.m., at Marriot Courtyard, 11220 Lee-Jackson Highway, Fairfax. Speakers will speak about educating spouses about separation and divorce process in order to encourage them to be civil and reasonable for their pocketbooks, emotional health and children. RSVP to claphambeankinney.com.

A Holiday Toy Train Show. 9 a.m.-3 p.m., at Shriner's Kena Temple, 9001 Arlington Boulevard, Fairfax. The show will include working layouts of model trains of all types and gauges. Model trains, track and components will also be available for sale. Admission is \$5; otherwise free for children under 12, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts in uniform (when accompanied by an adult, active members of the military, National Guard, Coast Guard and reserves, and members of the WB&A.

Advent Lessons and Carols. 5 p.m., at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 6509 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Choral anthems and congregational hymns will be sung in response to readings of prophecies of the coming messiah. 703-455-250 or www.standrews.net.

Fairfax Symphony Orchestra: Masterworks III. 8 p.m. George Mason University Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Conductor Christopher Zimmerman and pianist James Dick perform Rossini's Overture to La Gazza Ladra plus Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 and Symphony No. 6, "Pathétique." \$25-\$55. 703-563-1990 or www.fairfaxsymphony.org.

SUNDAY/DEC. 9

Journey to Bethlehem. 1-3 p.m., Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 8304 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. "Register for the census," visit the busy Bethlehem town with crafts and family activities, meet the members of the live nativity and the stable animals and be a part of the Christmas story. www.poplc.org.

Bein Hashmashot. 3 p.m., at the JCCNV, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. On the first day of Chanukah, the Israeli youth choir whose name means "between the suns" and who function as a melting pot of the Beit Shemesh society, add a little more light to the Festival of Lights with their high quality musical performance led by professional music directors; arts, crafts and food precede the 4 p.m. concert (latkes and sufganiyot donuts included). Reservations. \$3 for JCCNV members; \$5. 703-537-3000 or www.jccnv.org.

BULLETIN BOARD

Send notes to the Connection at south@connectionnewspapers.com or call 703-778-9416. Deadline is Friday. Dated announcements should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event.

FRIDAY/NOV. 16

Dog Adoptions. 6:30-8:30 p.m. PetSmart, 12971 Fair Lakes Center, Fairfax. Every Friday. Sponsored by Lost Dog & Cat Rescue Foundation. www.lostdogrescue.org.

(County) Community Engagement Meetings on Upcoming Multi-Year Budget Plan. 7-9 p.m., at Government Center, Conference rooms 9/10, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax. No registration needed, just come and share your voice. <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb/>.

SATURDAY/NOV. 17

Open Season Workshop. 10 a.m.-1 p.m., at W.T. Woodson High School, 9525 Main Street, Fairfax. For federal employees/retirees, FEHBP experts will present and answer questions on plan coverage and benefits before open season ends, Dec. 10. 703-256-3071 or www.opm.gov/insure/openseason/.

Dog and Cat Adoptions. 6:30-8:30 p.m. PetSmart Seven Corners, 12971 Fair Lakes Parkway, Fairfax. Every Saturday. Sponsored by Lost Dog & Cat Rescue Foundation. www.lostdogrescue.org.

Homeless Animals Rescue Team Dog Adoptions. 12-3 p.m. Petco, 13053 Lee Jackson Memorial Highway, Fairfax. Every Saturday. 703-817-9444 or www.hart90.org.

THURSDAY/NOV. 29

Facing Life's Losses. 7-9 p.m., at the City of Fairfax Regional Library, Room A, 10360 North St., Fairfax. A class offered through COAA's Healing Center on how to deal with the many faces of loss—whether of a home,

job, friendship, marriage or loved one; the class is designed from a Christian perspective but is open to people of all faiths. 703-966-5606 or healingcenterinternational.sharepoint.com.

THURSDAY/DEC. 6

Facing Life's Losses. 7-9 p.m., at the City of Fairfax Regional Library, Room A, 10360 North St., Fairfax. A class offered through COAA's Healing Center on how to deal with the many faces of loss—whether of a home, job, friendship, marriage or loved one; the class is designed from a Christian perspective but is open to people of all faiths. 703-966-5606 or healingcenterinternational.sharepoint.com.

SATURDAY/DEC. 8

Fairfax County Women in the NAACP (WIN) Holiday Celebration Brunch. 10 a.m.-noon, at Burke Center Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. RSVP by Dec 1. 703-40-2137 or fairfaxvawin@aol.com.

Dog Adoptions. 1-4 p.m. PetSmart, 12971 Fair Lakes Center, Fairfax. Every Saturday. Sponsored by Lost Dog & Cat Rescue Foundation. www.lostdogrescue.org.

THURSDAY/DEC. 13

Facing Life's Losses. 7-9 p.m., at the City of Fairfax Regional Library, Room A, 10360 North St., Fairfax. A class offered through COAA's Healing Center on how to deal with the many faces of loss—whether of a home, job, friendship, marriage or loved one; the class is designed from a Christian perspective but is open to people of all faiths. 703-966-5606 or healingcenterinternational.sharepoint.com.

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SPORTS

Stepka, Bowles Lead Woodson Boys' Basketball

Cavaliers focused on postseason success.

By JON ROETMAN
THE CONNECTION

The Woodson boys' basketball team breezed through Patriot District opponents during the 2011-12 regular season, posting a 13-1 mark en route to the top seed in the district tournament.

From that point, however, things no longer ran smoothly for the Cavaliers. With starting guard Michael Hansler sidelined with an ankle injury and team chemistry faltering, Woodson lost to T.C. Williams, 49-48, in the district semifinals and fell to Fairfax, 54-51, in overtime during the opening round of the Northern Region tournament. Just like that, the Cavaliers, who went 20-3 during the regular season, were done.

"Our chemistry wasn't as good as it should have been last year," sophomore point guard Eric Bowles said. "... It wasn't anything the coaches did. Players, they were separated and stuff."

Nine months later, Woodson returns six of its top 10 scorers for the 2012-13 campaign. Led by 6-foot-6 sharpshooter Tommy Stepka and Bowles, the Cavaliers have their sights set on assuring regular-season victories translate to postseason success.

"Anytime you return a lot of experience from a team that had success last season, goals or expectations are high," Woodson head coach Doug Craig said. "... The goal is to kind of take that next step and play deep into the regional tournament."

STEPKA, a senior, was Woodson's leading scorer last season at 12.7 points per contest and shot better than 40 percent from 3-point range. Craig said he would like to see Stepka improve at the defensive end and become a better all-around player.

"Last year, I think he kind of snuck up on people," Craig said. "I don't think people realized until we played 15 or 18 games how good he was. ... I don't think he'll sneak up [on teams this season]."

Stepka said shooting should again be a strength for Woodson. How does a team that shoots a lot from the perimeter avoid struggling?

"You've just got to be focused and have confidence," Stepka said. "... Just stay confident."

Bowles (5-11) started at point guard as a freshman last season, averaging 6.8 points and five assists per game. Craig said he wants Bowles to improve his game at each end of the floor and take on more of a leadership role.

"I think we have a very experienced point



PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

Woodson senior Tommy Stepka was the Cavaliers' leading scorer last season.

guard even though he's only a sophomore," Craig said. "He started 25 games and had an outstanding year for us [last season]."

Bowles said he feels the same now as he did when he was a freshman and any nerves he experienced last season weren't the product of being a ninth-grader on varsity.

"I'm expected to do better than what I did last year. I shouldn't get worse," he said. "I'm just going to come out and play my game. You always get nervous when you're about to play your first game. [It wasn't] really about being a freshman and coming in. That first game is the nervous one and then once you play that, everything's fine after that."

Hansler, a 6-foot-2 senior, enters his third season on the varsity.

"He has the athletic ability," Craig said, "to be a real dominating player."

Seniors Peter Murray (6-4) and Alex Boock (6-4), and junior Andy Stynchula (6-4) also return for Woodson. Craig said Boock will miss four-to-six weeks after having surgery on his right pinky finger.

WOODSON'S RETURNING ATHLETES will have to overcome the loss of third-leading scorer Brandon Stepka (graduation) and second-leading scorer AJ Carr, a 6-foot-6 forward who transferred to Saint James School in Hagerstown, Md.

"I'm hoping a strength this year will be our experience," Craig said, "[and] the fact we played in a lot of big games last year."

Woodson will scrimmage at Paul VI at 4 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 24 and will open the regular season at home against Robinson on Nov. 30.

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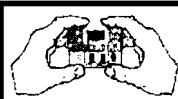
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Taxes may be paid in person Monday – Friday
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Treasurer's Office, Room 234, City Hall

IMPORTANT

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For Additional Information, please call 703-385-7904

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Fairfax Water

NOTICE OF WATER RATE Public Hearing

At 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 13, 2012, Fairfax Water will conduct a public hearing on its proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees and Charges. The hearing will be held in Fairfax Water's offices at 8570 Executive Park Avenue, Fairfax, VA.

The proposed changes, to be effective April 1, 2013, include the following:

1. An increase in the Availability Charge from \$3,700 to \$3,850†.
2. An increase in the Local Facilities Charge from \$9,000 to \$9,500.
3. An increase in the Service Connection Charge from \$1,000 to \$1,050†.
4. An increase in the Account Charge from \$33 to \$35.
5. An increase in the Quarterly Billing Service Charge from \$8.35 to \$9.20†.
6. An increase in the base Commodity Charge from \$2.16 to \$2.29 per 1,000 gallons of water.
7. An increase in the Peak Use Charge from \$3.20 to \$3.45 per 1,000 gallons of water.
8. An increase in the Turn Off / Turn On Charge from \$46 to \$50.
9. An increase in the Fees for Use of Fairfax Water Fire Hydrants to include the increase in the Commodity Charge and Peak Use Charge.
10. An increase in the Installation of Sewer Use Meter Charge from \$41 to \$44.
11. An increase in the Returned Payment Charge from \$16 to \$17.

A copy of the proposed changes can be viewed on our Web site at <http://www.fairfaxwater.org/rates/index.htm>. Those wishing to speak at this hearing or desiring a copy of the proposed changes should call Ms. Eva Catlin at 703-289-6017. Interested parties also may submit written comments to PublicHearingComments@fairfaxwater.org or mail written comments to:

Fairfax Water
Public Hearing Comments
8570 Executive Park Avenue
Fairfax, VA 22031

All written comments must be received by close of business on Wednesday, December 12, 2012 to be included in the record of the public hearing.

[†]Charges reflect fees associated with a standard 5/8" residential meter. Changes in charges for larger residential and commercial meters are reflected in the Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges.

Fairfax Water

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED 2013 BUDGET

Fairfax County Water Authority (Fairfax Water) is proposing a \$143.4 million budget for calendar year 2013¹.

On Thursday, December 13, 2012, Fairfax Water will conduct a public hearing on its proposed 2013 Budget in its offices at 8570 Executive Park Avenue, Fairfax. The public hearing will begin at 6:30 p.m.

A copy of the proposed budget can be viewed on our Web site at <http://www.fairfaxwater.org/>. Those wishing to speak at this hearing or desiring a copy of the proposed budget should call Ms. Eva Catlin at 703-289-6017.

Revenues are expected to be \$143.4 million in 2013. Water sales are expected to provide \$124.6 million. Approximately \$18.8 million is expected from connection charges, investment income and other sources.

The major areas of operation and maintenance expense are:

	-- \$1,000s --	
Category	2012	2013
Personal Services & Employee Benefits	\$46,473	\$48,367
Power and Utilities	11,345	11,686
Chemicals	6,694	7,968
Fuel	916	960
Postage	547	460
Insurance	1,300	1,107
Supplies and Materials	3,976	4,233
Contractual Services	8,749	8,657
Professional Services	1,656	1,902
Other	2,005	2,285
Sub-Total	83,661	87,625
Transfer to Improvement Fund	(9,559)	(9,613)
Total	74,102	78,012

Net revenues are expected to be appropriated as follows:

Debt Payment	\$39,374,000
Improvement Fund	\$11,000,000
General Fund	\$14,068,000

¹ Fairfax Water's Board will continue to monitor economic factors and review revenues and expenditures at mid-year to determine if additional action is needed.

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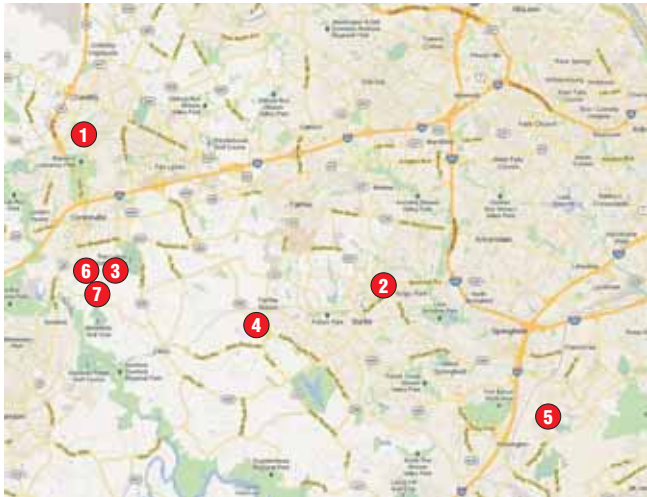
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Address	BR	FB	HB	Postal City	Sold Price ..	Type	Lot AC ..	PostalCode	Subdivision	Date Sold			
1 14030 EAGLE CHASE CIR	7	..	4	..	1	.....	CHANTILLY	\$648,800	...	Detached ...	0.27	20151	WALNEY ROAD	09/24/12
2 5201 DUNLEIGH GLEN LN	4	..	3	..	1	.....	BURKE	\$641,000	...	Detached ...	0.23	22015	DUNLEIGH	09/04/12
3 6230 SANDSTONE WAY	6	..	3	..	1	.....	CLIFTON	\$634,000	...	Detached ...	0.30	20124	LITTLE ROCKY RUN	09/12/12
4 11024 CLARA BARTON DR	4	..	2	..	1	.....	FAIRFAX STATION ..	\$633,000	...	Detached ...	0.58	22039	FAIRFAX STATION	09/14/12
5 6357 ALDERMAN DR	4	..	3	..	1	.....	ALEXANDRIA	\$633,000	...	Detached ...	0.10	22315	KINGSTOWNE	09/28/12
6 13910 MARBLESTONE DR	4	..	3	..	1	.....	CLIFTON	\$631,500	...	Detached ...	0.20	20124	LITTLE ROCKY RUN	09/26/12
7 6609 ROCK LAWN DR	6	..	4	..	1	CLIFTON	\$628,000	...	Detached ...	0.23	20124	LITTLE ROCKY RUN	09/06/12

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