

Oak Hill ♦ Herndon CONNECTION

Student athletes from Herndon High School and surrounding schools gather at ArtSpace to discuss the lead up to the passing of the Emancipation Proclamation Saturday, Feb. 9.

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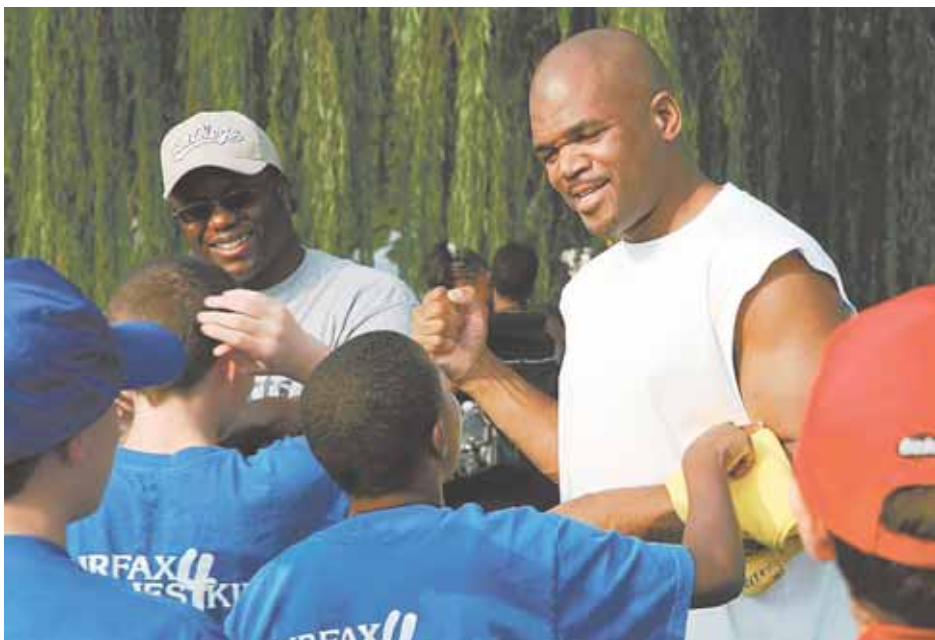
PHOTO BY ALEX McVEIGH/THE CONNECTION

FEBRUARY 13-19, 2012

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THE COUNTY LINE

During a fundraising walk in 2006, youth in Fairfax Families4Kids were greeted by rapper Run DMC, who grew up in foster care. Pastor Dan Rhodes (left) organized the event.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOAN BRADY

A Positive Reflection

Joan Brady gives foster children needed exposure.

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION

The last in a series.

On Monday, Sept. 10, 2001, Joan Brady of Great Falls had just started a three-month sabbatical from her job with an Internet company. Newly-married, Brady, who was 36 years old at the time, was exhausted from 80-hour work weeks in a rigid corporate environment. She wanted time that fall to contemplate what to do next with her life.

The next day provided answers and a sense of urgency. It was Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2001.

The terrorist attacks, and the moving stories of heroism and tragedy on 9/11, indelibly left their mark. Brady, like many Americans, was inspired to do something new, to take more chances, to change direction.

"After that tragic day, it was hard to imagine going back to a job that had seemed critically important, but now felt largely meaningless," she said.

She thought she might become a social worker or a teacher, a job where she could make a difference in other people's lives. She decided to volunteer as a homework tutor at a group home for foster children.

As she struggled to find a way to motivate her students, she began "bribing" them with her photography. "Some teachers gave kids candy in exchange for completing homework assignments. I thought I'd try taking their photos and giving them copies," Brady said.

Their reaction to having their photos taken surprised her.

"It made me realize that they didn't have pictures of themselves, other than the one snapshot for their official file," Brady said. "I came to understand the connection between their having their picture taken and self-esteem."

According to child development experts, photos say "I'm important in this family." They show a child he or she is meaningfully connected to others, and provide a visual symbol of nurturing, love and caring. Foster children, who are frequently shuffled from one home to the next, rarely have family photos.

"In those days, I actually wasn't a professional photographer, just a gal with a point and shoot digital camera, trying to get through a three-month commitment I had made," Brady said. "I took pictures of the kids in the group home, mugging for the camera, playing basketball, bike riding, playing on the playground and occasionally holding up a good report from school."

She gave her students little \$1 photo albums she purchased at Michaels so they would have a place to store their photos.

She realized just how important the photos were to her students when she showed up at school one day and learned the photo albums had caused some trouble.

"It turned out that the kids weren't allowed to take anything to bed with them and several had been caught taking their little photo albums that we were filling with pictures to bed with them," she said. "It was in that moment that I realized I was doing something more than getting through the three-month commitment that I had made to be a homework tutor. I stayed on well beyond my three-month commitment."

By 2004, she combined her love of photography with her ability to connect with children and started Joan Brady Photography. She also began photographing foster children featured on Wednesday's Child. During a shoot in 2005, she met Beverly Howard, the director of a small Fairfax County foster-mentoring program called Fairfax Families4Kids.

In Fairfax County, about 400 children are in foster care, and about 20 children, most of whom are 14 and older, are in the Fairfax Families4Kids program. According to

Howard, these children are considered more difficult to place in adoptive homes because they are typically teens who have a range of special needs. Mentors provide one-on-one support and participate in monthly group activities.

"I got involved with the program when I met Beverly Howard, the director. She is a force of nature, a person no one can say no to. I have learned so much from her and have been so inspired by both her wisdom and her spirit," Brady said.

She became the group's volunteer photographer, shooting the children during their outings with mentors. Many of the children, especially the girls, didn't like to be photographed. They thought they were ugly, unworthy of a photographer's time.

Brady often carries photographs of the program's children with her. In one photo, Kenny, a 14-year-old from Reston who was recently adopted, is high in the air, all legs and arms, about to make a powerful slam dunk. In another photo, Serena, 17, flashes a warm smile, her face framed in a cascade of long brown curls.

"Serena is a really interesting story. She's a tough girl whose initial reaction of 'don't take my picture!' evolved into 'take a picture of me!' and 'How come there aren't more pictures of me in the book!' She is such a sweet and thoughtful girl," Brady said.

Howard said Brady's photos capture the children's creativity and give them a positive reflection, something most of them have never had. She said the children are



Fairfax Families4Kids hosts a number of events for foster youth and mentors. In the photo, a 14-year-old boy in the program is getting his face painted at a Fairfax festival.

Consider Mentoring

Fairfax Families4Kids is actively seeking mentors to connect with older children in foster care, those most at-risk for homelessness. To find out more about the Fairfax Families4Kids program or to become a volunteer or mentor, contact Beverly Howard, Ph.D., coordinator of the Fairfax Families4Kids program at 703-324-7518.

empowered by getting their photos taken.

"Joan sees well beyond the labels that so many of our youth have gathered along their journey in foster care," Howard said. "She can see the gifted artists, the aspiring scientists, the comedians, the athletes, and the beautiful children waiting for an opportunity to bloom."

Becoming an Advocate

Brady doesn't look like a fighter. She is petite, quick to laugh, and looks younger than her 48 years. But spend five minutes with her, and one quickly finds out how passionate and relentless she is about Fairfax Families4Kids.

"Actually, [fighting for children] started when I became a court appointed special advocate for a 9-year-old boy in foster care from DC in 2002. And yeah, I was surprised ... surprised that doing what was right by children was something that most often required a fight," she said during a recent breakfast.

"This is not just mentoring. Beverly has created a family, a family where one would not otherwise exist. It's a family where kids are loved unconditionally, which, in my ex

SEE MENTORS, PAGE 4

Virginia Senators Tim Kaine and Mark Warner speak to members of the Northern Virginia Technology Council Friday, Feb. 8, in Reston.



PHOTOS BY
ALEX McVEIGH/
THE CONNECTION

Senators Speak on Debt Situation

Mark Warner, Tim Kaine address Northern Virginia Technology Council.

BY ALEX McVEIGH
THE CONNECTION

Senators Mark Warner (D) and Tim Kaine (D) spoke to members of the Northern Virginia Technology Council Friday, Feb. 8, at the Sprint building in Reston. The two senators spoke about the threat of sequestration as well as the country's ongoing debt situation.

Warner said that sequestration would be "worse than you can imagine," should the automatic federal budget cuts come into effect after the March 1 deadline.

"We have muffed this thing four times. We blew it with the debt ceiling, a debacle that made it an embarrassment to be a member of congress. We blew it with the super committee, we blew it when bipartisan efforts were undermined and we blew it on New Year's Eve," he said.

He pointed out the difference budgets can have year to year, such as with the Department of Defense paying for ships or other big ticket items, which can cause massive swings in budget.

He also said that sequestration would cost the taxpayers massive amounts of money because sequestration will force cancellations of contracts, which will cause the government to forfeit its legally required volume discounts for certain purchases.

"If we have to go through a little bit of sequestration before we come to our senses, let's at least give the secretaries the appropriate budget authority to be able to move money from one account to the other," he said.

Kaine, the Virginia governor from 2006 to 2010, was elected to his first term in the senate last November. He stressed the seriousness of the current budget woes the country is facing.



Senator Mark Warner speaks about the debt to the Northern Virginia Technology Council Friday, Feb. 8.



Senator Tim Kaine addresses members of the Northern Virginia Technology Council Friday, Feb. 8, at the Sprint building in Reston.

"The single greatest threat to national security is budget uncertainty," he said. "Because our ability to deal with any external threat depends upon having some degree of certainty so we can plan to address the challenge."

Kaine said the country needs to let national security needs drive the budget, not the other way around. The problem, he said, isn't just dealing with ways to find the billions needed for large projects and defense items, it also is a major issue for the men and women of the armed forces.

"I met a 20-year-old airman who was preparing for her first deployment, and she told me 'I've been thinking about a career in the military, but maybe because of the budget situation that's not a realistic goal to think about,'" he said. "This situation is affecting the thinking of a lot of people who will be leaders of this country in the future, so we've got to get it right."



PHOTO BY ALEX McVEIGH/THE CONNECTION

Will Ferguson, a senior at Herndon High School and Concorde District's player of the year for basketball, reads from documents by abolitionist Sherman Booth at Herndon's ArtSpace Saturday, Feb. 9, to commemorate Black History Month.

Student-athletes Mark Black History Month

Herndon students commemorate 150 years since signing of Emancipation Proclamation.

BY ALEX McVEIGH
THE CONNECTION

Three years ago, Elise Ashby Arrington decided that she wanted her son Harrison Craddock to understand the importance of Black History Month. So she had Craddock, a track and football player at Herndon High School, connect with a few of his fellow athletes at Herndon and nearby high schools.

"There's a lot of black history that kids these days aren't aware of, so I wanted to do something to educate them, and anyone else that was interested," Arrington said. "When we first moved here, he mentioned that there weren't any local Black History Month events to go to, so I decided to create one."

"Since my son knows a lot of athletes, I figured he could get them involved."

This year the students read selections from important documents leading up to the Emancipation Proclamation, which was signed 150 years ago on Jan. 1, 1863.

They started with the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which mandated the return of any escaped slaves to their masters, and it made it the duty of any law enforcement officer to apprehend the escaped slaves.

"The Fugitive Slave Act was one of those most controversial acts of the 1850 compromise

[between Northern and Southern states], and it heightened the fears of a slave power conspiracy," said Cameron Reynolds, a senior football, basketball and track player for Stone Bridge High School. "Abolitionists nicknamed it the 'Bloodhound Law' for the dogs that were used to track down runaway slaves."

From that act in 1850, the students traced several documents all the way through the passage of Abraham Lincoln's proclamation that freed the slaves, to the 13th amendment (which abolished slavery), 15th amendment (which prohibits voting discrimination on the basis of race) and 19th amendment (which gave women the right to vote).

In addition to Craddock and Reynolds, Herndon students Casey Holland, Will Ferguson, Darrius Hicks, Austin Schnarrs, Ryan Griffin and Denzel Weaver also participated in the event. They were joined by Justin Walker, a senior at Cedar Lane High School, Malik Piersol, a junior at Westfield High School and Dawton Robinson, a senior at Quander Road High School.

Several members of the group went to see the document on display at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 1.

"We waited in line for more than an hour waiting to go see the document, and it was pretty cold," Craddock said. "But it was worth it."

THE COUNTY LINE



PHOTO BY ELLEN ZANGLA

Joan Brady is an award-winning photographer whose images have appeared in many publications.

Mentors Seen as 'Family'

FROM PAGE 2

perience, is very rare for children in foster care who are most often judged by their worst behaviors with a blind eye turned toward their attributes."

Sully District Supervisor Michael Frey, a champion of the program, was quick to praise Brady's role in the program.

"While the mentors and volunteers are definitely the heart of FF4Kids, Joan Brady is definitely its soul," Frey said. "I can't imagine where the program would be without her."

Neither can anyone else connected to the program.

In 2009, when the program was in danger of being eliminated because of across-the-board cuts in the county budget, Brady marshaled an army of supporters, launched a "save the program" blog, and cajoled, begged and nagged officials to keep the program. (In 2010, the program, fueled primarily by the work of the mentors and volunteers, cost about \$133,000 in a social services budget of more than \$200 million.)

Brady appeared before the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors during the budget hearings. Her plan was to let the program's youth speak directly to the supervisors.

County officials said no. That answer was not acceptable to Brady.

"That's when we began fighting. I may have led the effort, but it was very much of a group commitment," Brady said. "We knew that these kids were virtually invisible to the community. We knew that they could not stand up for themselves. We wrote letters and emails and met individually with members of the Board of Supervisors. We went directly to the Human Services Council, writing to them as well."

Supporters scheduled their testimony so that they had a block of time, and they coordinated their speeches so that each of them covered a different aspect of the program.

And Brady made sure supervisors heard from the children, by having supporters read comments from their audio testimony.

Molly Pell of Fairfax spoke about adopting one of the children in the program, and included the comments of a youth she mentored

"None of us in this room can fully understand what Families4Kids means to the youth involved, but I

believe one of our youth stated it best, when she told us:

"[If I didn't have FF4Kids], I would lose my mind ... I would lose my sanity. I wouldn't be able to function much. Cause even now I don't have very much. I get teased on at school. I get teased at the place where I'm supposed to call home. If I lost here ... it would be like there was no reason to do anything anymore."

In their short lives, so much has been taken from these youth. Please don't take away Fairfax Families4Kids," Pell said during the hearings.

"We stood together as unified members of the community," Brady said. "We achieved a stay of execution during those budget hearings in 2010."

Being Part of the "Family"

Brady is an award-winning photographer whose images have appeared in many publications, including "The Washington Post," "NYTimes.com," "Washingtonian" magazine, "Children's Voice" (the magazine of the Welfare League of America) and "O Magazine."

She is justifiably proud of her work, and will talk about it when prompted.

But she quickly steers the conversation back to the children, and how much difference mentors make in the lives of foster children. What she is not always quick to talk about is that the children in the program consider her an important part of their "family," too.

During a celebration for mentors last month, Jorge, 17, stood up to address the group: "I don't have a mentor, but Joan is always there for me ... I check in with her and she checks in with me, nagging me about school and work," he said. "I know she cares."

"Honestly, I probably am in touch with him every week-and-a-half, and I think he usually checks in and when I respond, I do totally nag," she said, laughing. "Ok, I do follow the kids on Facebook, so occasionally I check in to admonish, but it's not much."

"But see. Just that tiny bit of interaction he has with me—something that I hadn't even noted—makes a big difference for him. It just takes a tiny bit of attention to make a difference," Brady said. "That's why I want the story to be about what's really important: the children, definitely not me ..."



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Lily Dunlap's winning peace poster.

Lily Dunlap of Herndon Middle Wins Peace Poster Contest

Lily Dunlap, an eighth grade student at Herndon Middle School, won a competition sponsored by the Reston Lions Club.

Dunlap's poster was among more than 350,000 entries submitted worldwide in the annual Lions Clubs International Peace Poster Contest. Lions Clubs International is sponsoring the program to emphasize the importance of world peace to young people everywhere.

The poster was selected by the Reston Lions Club for its originality, artistic merit and portrayal of the contest theme, "Imagine Peace."

"Dreams come true when you believe, so believe in peace," the 13-year-old from Reston said.

Sue Beffel, Reston Lions Club president, said she was impressed by the expression and creativity of the students at Herndon Middle School. "These young people have strong ideas about what peace means to them. I'm so proud that we

were able to provide them with the opportunity to share their vision." Locally, the Reston Lions Club will recognize Dunlap and other students for their participation at Herndon Middle School.

Dunlap's poster will advance through the district, multiple district and international levels of competition if she is to be declared the international grand prize winner. One international grand prizewinner and 23 merit award winners will be selected. The grand prize includes a cash award of \$5,000, plus a trip for the winner and two family members to an awards ceremony at Lions Day with the United Nations in March 2013.

"Our club is cheering for Lily as her poster advances in the competition, and we hope that her vision will ultimately be shared with others around the world," Beffel said.

View past international grand prizewinners at www.lionsclubs.org.

Joan Lorraine (Stark) Mikulak, 81, of Oak Hill, Dies

Joan Lorraine (Stark) Mikulak died on Monday, Jan. 28, after a short illness. She was 81.

Joan was born in Mt. Hope, N.J. to Wilbert and Viola (Smith) Stark. She grew up in Mt. Hope and resided in Randolph, N.J., Mansfield, N.J., and Florida before settling in Oak Hill.

Mikulak was a homemaker and previously worked in the print shop at Picatinny Arsenal, N.J.

She was also a member of Pender United Methodist Church in Fairfax.

Mikulak was preceded in death by her sister Esther Sinclair.

She is survived by her husband Stanley of 55 years, their daughter Sandra Tucker and her husband Edward of Oak Hill, and two grandsons, Charles and John

Tucker.

Joan is also survived by her sister Alice Scheper of Lakeland, Fla., her brother, Wilbert Stark and his wife Nancy of Netcong, N.J., and several nieces and nephews.

Visitation was held on Friday, Feb. 8, 6-8 p.m. at the Birmingham Funeral Home, 216 S. Main St., Wharton, N.J. A funeral service was held Saturday, Feb. 9, at 8 a.m. at the funeral home. Interment will follow at Locust Hill Cemetery in Dover, N.J.

The family requests, in lieu of flowers, donations in Joan's memory to Pender United Methodist Church Global Missions fund, Pender UMC, 12401 Alder Woods Drive, Fairfax, VA 22033. Offer condolences at www.BirminghamFH.com.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Sweet Tradition Raises Funds for Local Children in Need

BY ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

Chocolate Festival at Herndon's Floris United Methodist Church.

The Floris United Methodist Church in Herndon has been hosting their annual Chocolate Festival for charity for about 20 years. What started those long years ago as little more than a bake sale with a few tables of homemade goodies has evolved into a major community event, attended by not

only the church's parishioners, but by hundreds of families from the immediate area and well beyond.

This year's affair on Saturday, Feb. 9, might just take the chocolate cake—so to speak. Cynthia Lopynski, Floris UMC's director of connections, and Laurie Tillet, who spearheads communications, were both

quick to direct accolades for the festival's success to the volunteers who pick up the spatula and run with it. "It's all them, the volunteers," said Tillet. "And it seems that each year they come up with bigger and better activities, more sponsors, and just a lot more fun for everyone."

No doubt the crowds agreed as they navi-

gated two floors of more than 25 games, activities, face painters, balloon sculptors, food stations, and, of course, chocolate treats. Volunteers manned the Obstacle Course, the Inflatable Twister, the Froggy Fly Ring and all of the action adventures,

SEE CHURCH, PAGE 7

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OPINION

On Transportation

Compromise, in the works, should include indexing the gas tax to inflation.

Virginia needs more options, not fewer, in developing revenue to pay for roads and transportation. Compromise on a plan to increase transportation revenue should not include making Virginia the only state in the nation without a gas tax. The current, ridiculously low gas tax should be indexed to inflation. The last thing the commonwealth needs is to do away with an existing, major source of money for roads.

Sen. Dick Saslaw proposed raising the tax, now 17.5 cents a gallon, by five cents each of the next two years and then indexing it to inflation. At the least, the tax should be indexed to rise with inflation from its current level.

Possible proposals to cut the tax in half along with increases in the sales tax miss the point, but are still far preferable to eliminating it.

The gas tax is a user fee. It raises money for roads from people and businesses who are using the roads, including drivers who pass

through Virginia from out of state.

We agree with Del. Scott Surovell, who says: "Funding roads exclusively with sales taxes disproportionately burdens the elderly who drive less than others and people who do not own cars."

Medicaid Expansion Progresses

The Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce said it well when it issued a statement in favor of the commonwealth embracing \$10 billion in federal money to expand the number of people eligible for health insurance under Medicaid:

"Northern Virginia businesses and taxpayers are already paying for health reform through new taxes levied by the Affordable Care Act. If we do not take advantage of Medicaid reform [and expansion], roughly \$10 billion in Virginia taxpayer dollars will go to the federal government to fund coverage extension in other states. If the General Assembly approves the reform and extension plan, nearly all those taxpayer dollars will remain in-state where they can be put to good use for the benefit of the commonwealth, its businesses and its citizens."

Sex Trafficking in Our Backyard

Northern Virginia is seeing increasing numbers of reported cases of sexual trafficking.

BY TIMOTHY D. HUGO
STATE DELEGATE (R-40)

A couple of years ago, I became aware that sex trafficking of children was not solely an international issue, but one that was happening in our own backyard. Unfortunately, the truth is that it is one of the fastest growing criminal industries in the world, in the United States and, yes, here in Virginia. In 2011, I began working with Shared Hope International. This organization strives to prevent sex slavery, restore victims of sex trafficking, bring justice to vulnerable women and children, and strengthen Virginia's laws.

Since that time, the fight against human trafficking has become a top priority of mine. I am committed to fight against those who would do harm to our young people by enacting harsher penalties to those convicted of these horrendous crimes and by increasing public awareness.

According to the Polaris Project, a leading organization in the global fight against human traffick-



ing, over 100,000 children alone are victims of the sex trade in the United States each year. It ranks Virginia seventh in the nation in the percentage of calls received reporting human trafficking. This is not a top ten category that any state seeks. Northern Virginia itself is seeing increasing numbers of reported cases of sexual trafficking occurring in massage parlors, online escort services, and gang-related activities among other av-

enues. Just last year, members of a Fairfax-based gang were arrested for soliciting Fairfax County high school girls for sex trafficking.

Virginia lawmakers have responded and enacted several pieces of legislation including my HB 1898, which raised the penalty for abducting any individual for the purposes of prostitution or abducting a minor for child pornography. In addition, the General Assembly currently has before it my HB 1606, which would stiffen the penalty for soliciting a minor for prostitution. I will continue to look for ways to make Virginia one of the least desirable states for those who seek to harm our young people.

I am not alone in combating this evil. I will continue to work closely with Governor McDonnell, Attorney General Cuccinelli, my colleagues in the General Assembly, Shared Hope International, the Polaris Project, the Richmond Justice Initiative, law enforcement agencies and others to increase awareness of this issue and to institute harsher punishments for those who seek to harm young

Call for Photos for Pet Connection

The Pet Connection, a twice-yearly special edition, will publish at the end of February, and photos and stories of your pets with you and your family should be submitted by Thursday, Feb. 21.

Our favorite pictures include both pets and humans. Please identify everyone in the photo, give a brief description of what is happening in the photo and of your pet, and include address and phone number (we will not publish your address or phone number, just your town name). We also welcome short stories about how you got your pet, a noteworthy talent or anecdote about your pet, and drawings, paintings or other artwork of your pet by children or adults.

To see our last pet edition, visit:

<http://connectionarchives.com/PDF/2012/072512/Great%20Falls.pdf>

<http://connectionarchives.com/PDF/2012/072512/Herndon.pdf>

<http://connectionarchives.com/PDF/2012/072512/McLean.pdf>

<http://connectionarchives.com/PDF/2012/072512/Reston.pdf>

<http://connectionarchives.com/PDF/2012/072512/Vienna.pdf>

Residents from Vienna-Oakton, McLean, Great Falls, Reston, or Herndon areas should send submissions to:

north@connectionnewspapers.com.

people for financial gain.

Corporations are also participating in efforts to battle human trafficking. Just last year, AT&T granted the Richmond Justice Initiative \$25,000 to develop educational programs to help prevent human trafficking in the Richmond area.

I believe there is no worse crime than one committed against a child. I am dedicated to ensuring child sex traffickers remain behind bars longer for such horrific behavior, so that no child falls prey to those who seek them harm.

One child taken from his/her home, one young person falling prey to this evil, is one too many.

If you would like additional information on this issue, please contact me at 703-815-1201 or delthugo@house.virginia.gov

The writer is a majority caucus chairman at the Virginia House of Delegates.

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PHOTO BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION

Senior Pastor Rev. Tom Berlin checks in with volunteers Esthar Smitha and Vinayak Hassan who cheerfully manned one of the bakery sales tables.

Church Hosts Chocolate Festival

FROM PAGE 5

helping young attendees safely toss, hop, twist and bounce their way through the day. Adults did their share of merrymaking as well, participating in the Cupcake Walk, Interactive Candyland, and a bit of hoop tossing. Quite a few moms and dads were also seen sporting sponged-on tattoos and even some colorful face art.

"What could be better," declared Senior Pastor Rev. Tom Berlin, "than all this fun

for a great cause? This event has always been about raising funds for outreach programs, never about our budget or church financial needs."

As they have for several years, the funds raised this year will support the Helping Hungry Kids Ministry. "We've been partnering on this program with Hutchison Elementary School in Herndon for a long time," said Rev. Berlin. The monies are used

SEE SWEET, PAGE 11

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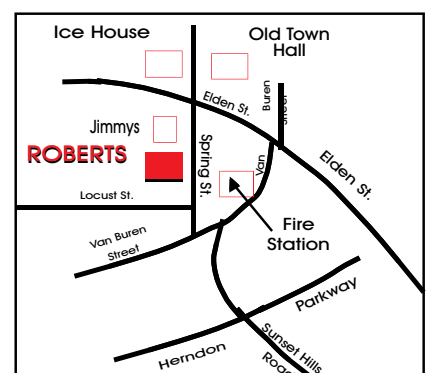


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PHOTOS BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

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IN DECEMBER 2012, 63 HOMES SOLD BETWEEN \$1,050,000-\$160,000 IN THE HERNDON AND OAK HILL AREA, AND 66 RESTON HOMES SOLD BETWEEN \$1,482,500-\$104,500.

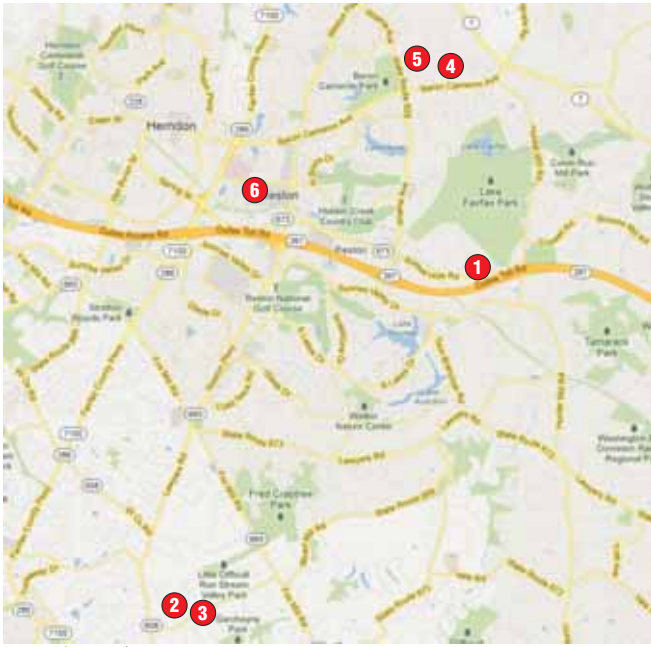
1 10804 Sunset Hills Road, Reston — \$1,482,500



2 12403 English Garden Court, Herndon — \$1,050,000



4 1302 Aldbury Way, Reston — \$900,000



© Google Map data



5 11201 Longwood Grove Drive, Reston — \$860,000



6 11990 Market Street #711, Reston — \$729,000

Address	BR	FB	HB	...	Postal City	...	Sold Price	...	Type	...	Lot AC	PostalCode	.....	Subdivision	.....	Date Sold	
1 10804 SUNSET HILLS RD	6	..	5	..	1	.....	RESTON	.....	\$1,482,500	.....	Detached	....	2.11	.....	BALL C R	.....	12/21/12
2 12403 ENGLISH GARDEN CT ...	5	..	4	..	1	.....	HERNDON	...	\$1,050,000	.....	Detached	....	1.37	.....	COPPER CREEK	.....	12/07/12
3 3202 UPPER WYNNEWOOD PL	4	..	3	..	1	.....	HERNDON	.....	\$915,000	.....	Detached	....	1.36	.....	WYNNEWOOD	.....	12/21/12
4 1302 ALDBURY WAY	4	..	3	..	1	.....	RESTON	.....	\$900,000	.....	Detached	....	0.25	.....	CRIPPENS CORNER	.....	12/10/12
5 11201 LONGWOOD GROVE DR	5	..	3	..	1	.....	RESTON	.....	\$860,000	.....	Detached	....	0.46	.....	RESTON	.....	12/28/12
6 11990 MARKET ST #711	2	..	2	..	0	RESTON	\$729,000	Hi-Rise 9+ Floors	20190	..	MIDTOWN AT RESTON TOWN	..	12/27/12

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Home LifeStyle

The owners of this Fairfax Station master bathroom decided to turn their outdated space into a modern, spa retreat.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF
RJK CONSTRUCTION



Home Remodeling Projects Continue to Rise

Updating kitchens and bathrooms are homeowners' priorities.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Home remodeling projects continue to rebound, and kitchens and bathrooms are at the top of the project list, according to a new report for the National Association of the Remodeling Industry.

"I was personally surprised [by] the number of really high-end projects, like those over \$150,000," said Nikki Golden, NARI spokeswoman.

When the owners of a Fairfax Station home decided to turn their outdated master bathroom into a modern spa retreat, they added a black granite vanity, matching shower bench and custom glass shower doors. "This master bathroom has been completely transformed into an oasis," said Fairfax-based contractor Robert Kalmin of RJK Construction. "Immediately as you walk in, you are greeted by a large double vanity. The cabinetry door style is Centennial from Bertch Bath. Two mirrors with matching trim are hung above each sink and add continuity."

Kalmin, who is also a board member of the Washington-region's National Association of the Remodeling Industry chapter, said that a creative use of lighting helped set a relaxing, spa-like tone. "Three sconce lights add direct lighting and flare to this bathroom," he said. "The Key West soaking tub ... would make anyone jealous. A unique feature in this bathroom is the extra cabinet that is adjacent to the bathtub. It adds extra storage space and creates more countertop space for decorative items like candles."

WHEN IT COMES TO kitchens, NARI says homeowners are expressing a desire to expand. For example, when the owners of a Reston home decided to remodel their kitchen, they removed a wall that separated the kitchen from the living area and cre-

ated a open, free-flowing space that allowed for casual entertaining.

"Removing a partition wall allowed us to bring out a peninsula into the living area, expanding the kitchen and providing the opportunity for additional cabinetry, countertop space and a bar top," said Suzanne Kalmin of RJK Construction. "The [cabinetry] creates a contrast in the kitchen. The door style is a full overlay, called Pembroke and the finish is 'Raven' on cherry wood."

The homeowners wanted a durable counter surface so they chose quartz. In addition, "a section of butcher block next to the cook-top serves as a convenient prep space for cutting vegetables or bread," Suzanne Kalmin added. "This kitchen is packed with professional grade appliances, [including] a Viking professional cooktop and oven-microwave combination."



The owners of this Reston kitchen chose stainless steel appliances to create an earthy but luxurious atmosphere.

The homeowners chose stainless steel appliances to strike an earthy but luxurious tone, she continued. "[They] are complemented by the stainless steel backsplash ... behind the range and between the countertop and bar of the peninsula. A staggered glass natural stone combination tile is featured in the backsplash. The front of the bar is covered with a staggered natural stacked stone."

To complete the project, the wood flooring the adjacent living room was refinished to match the flooring in the remodeled kitchen to create a seamless finish.



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Home LifeStyle

How Does Your Garden Grow?

Capital Home and Garden Show set for Feb. 22-24 at Dulles Expo Center.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Since Punxsutawney Phil didn't see his shadow on Groundhog Day earlier this month, spring might be around the corner. But whether one believes in folklore or not, the winter chill will soon give way to warm weather blooms.

If the thought of getting a spring garden ready is enough to make you crawl back into your own hole, the Capital Home and Garden Show might offer inspiration. Justin Cave, of HGTV's "Ground Breakers" and Tim Carter, who gives residential construction advice in his nationally syndicated column, "Ask the Builder," are scheduled to headline the show. Set for Feb. 22-24, at Chantilly's Dulles Expo Center, the event will offer homeowners more than 500 vendors pedaling the latest in home and garden services and products.

Cameron Ashburn who lives in Arlington is planning to attend. "I've never had luck creating a nice yard because I have a brown thumb instead of a green one," he said. "I'll probably end up hiring a landscaper, but it'll be good to see what's out there."

Peter Hogarth of Merrifield Garden Center in Fair Oaks, Merrifield and Gainesville, has attended the show in the past. "Some vendors set up displays that are designed to look like an outside landscape setting," he said.

Those attending the show will have an opportunity to see presentations, attend seminars and get expert advice on everything from building an outdoor kitchen to creating water gardens.

"Typically customers look at patios and landscape



PHOTO COURTESY OF MERRIFIELD GARDEN CENTER

From water gardens to outdoor kitchens, homeowners will be offered ideas aplenty at the Capital Home and Garden Show.

Capital Home and Garden Show

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Friday, Feb. 22: 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 23: 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Sunday, Feb. 24: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Tickets (single tickets valid for one day of show):

On-site adult admission \$10; Online adult admission \$7

Children 6-12 years old admission \$3

Children 5 years and under free

For more information visit

www.capitalhomeandgardenshow.com.

and displays of different plants," said Bill Mann of Behnke's Nursery in Potomac, Md.

The show will run from 10 a.m. until 9 p.m. Friday, Feb. 22, from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 23 and from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 24. Tickets may be purchased online at www.capitalhomeandgardenshow.com.

OPEN HOUSES

SATURDAY/SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16 & 17

When you visit one of these Open Houses, tell the Realtor you saw it in this Connection Newspaper. For more real estate listings and open houses, visit www.ConnectionNewspapers.com and click on the "This Week in Real Estate" link. **Call Specific Agents to Confirm Dates & Times**

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7262 Linden Tree Ln.....\$449,950.....Sun 1-4..Kathleen Quintarelli.....Weichert..703-862-8808

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9811 Oak Valley Ct.....\$875,000..Sat/Sun 1-4.....Robin Butler.....Prudential..703-281-8500

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To add your Realtor represented Open House to these weekly listings, please call Karen Pechacek-Washburn at 703-778-9422 or E-Mail the info to kwashburn@connectionnewspapers.com All listings due by Monday at 3 P.M.

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Last Minute Valentine's Day Ideas

Subtle accents for the most romantic holiday of the year.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Still looking for Valentine's Day home accents? Local design experts say it is not too late to add touches of romance in time for Cupid's big day.

Laura Smith of the Dandelion Patch in Vienna and Reston, suggests chocolate-scented candles, soaps and shea butter. "They are very pretty and you could put them in a guest bathroom and the candles in the living room," she said. "They smell delicious—almost edible."

Next on her list is a napkin box with cupcake napkins and paperweights. "They are perfect

for entertaining, but also beautiful enough to leave out all year round," said Smith. "Napkins and weights can be changed out to make this perfect for any event or time of year."

Judy Philactos of Periwinkle Gifts recommends miniature glass hearts displayed on a tiny serving tray. "Feather heart wreaths also make nice displays," she said.

When it comes to Valentine's Day bouquets and centerpieces, floral designer Evelyn Kinville of Behnkes Florist in Potomac, Md., says there are plenty of options. "While Valentine's Day is almost exclusively rose-based, it doesn't have to be," she said. "There are French tulips, which are larger and longer-stemmed than traditional



PHOTO BY MARILYN CAMPBELL/THE CONNECTION

Heart wreaths are a simple and stylish way to make one's home reflect the most romantic day of the year.

tulips. You can use hyacinths, fragrant hybrid lilies and freesia."

NEWS



Raina Wittrock, two-and-a-half, of Herndon gives it her all playing the Tip-A-Troll Toss game.



Balloon sculptor Rick Wormeli entranced his young audience, including Herndon residents Sydney Schneider, 9, Tabitha Erazo, 5, and Amelia Luongo, 7. The multi-colored octopus was a big favorite. Wormeli, an educational consultant, learned the art for his daughter's birthday party. He enjoyed it so much, that many years later, he still volunteers at events like the Floris Chocolate Festival.

Sweet Tradition Continues

FROM PAGE 7

to purchase healthy meals and snacks that are prepared at packaging events by church volunteers and then supplied to Hutchison, where teachers discreetly add them to the backpacks of about one hundred children each Friday afternoon as they leave school. "Years ago," explained Laurie Tillet, "several people noticed, especially a school bus driver, that some of the kids returned to school on Mondays seeming less energetic and ready for action. These kids were getting breakfasts and lunches at school, but were go-

ing home on weekends to situations where enough healthy food was just not available."

The folks at Floris UMC extend their good work even during the summer by hosting a four-week Day Camp at their facility. Volunteers aid the youngsters, providing educational support, lots of fun, and again, ensuring that plenty of nutritional food keeps them growing and glowing.

Once again Floris United Methodist Church has whipped up a recipe for sweet success in their community.

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SPORTS

Oakton Boys' Basketball Secures Concorde's No. 2 Seed

Cougars beat Westfield in regular-season finale.

BY JON ROETMAN
THE CONNECTION

Oakton's Thomas Tribble and Westfield's C.J. Hill spent a portion of the third quarter talking trash to one another as the Concorde District foes battled with hopes of securing a Northern Region tournament berth.

Emotion spilled into the fourth quarter as Oakton's Will Smith and Westfield's Chris Mullins were involved in a tussle that resulted in each being assessed a technical foul.

The Oakton Cougars and Westfield Bulldogs entered Friday night's game in a three-way tie for second place, and the two teams played with passion as they attempted to improve their position in the district standings. But when the final buzzer rang, it was fired-up Oakton head coach Dave Brooks hugging guard Robert Bacon and Cougar fans rushing the court in celebration.

The Oakton boys' basketball team defeated Westfield 61-57 during both teams' regular season finale on Feb. 8 at Oakton High School. With the victory, the Cougars secured the No. 2 seed in the Concorde District tournament, which came with a berth in the regional tournament.

Bacon, Oakton's primary offensive threat who finished with 13 points, fouled out with 3:52 remaining in the fourth quarter, but the Cougars found a way to get the victory. Oakton led 59-57 with 12 seconds remaining and senior Michael Fradette buried a pair of free throws to secure the win.

"What I'm most proud of is that we really fought through adversity," Brooks said. "Everybody knows how valuable Robert is to our basketball team. When he fouled out with four minutes to go, we were playing an even basketball game and [junior guard] Brandon Wiseman really stepped up and was a floor general out there. We did a great job valuing the basketball late in the game and we got a lot of good looks because of our execution as a basketball team. We rely so much on isolation sets, but we really played team basketball when Robert was out of the game."

Fradette and Tribble were two Cougars who came up clutch. Fradette, a 6-foot-5 senior, finished with 18 points and 12 rebounds, and made a huge hustle play with less than 30 seconds remaining. Smith made



Oakton senior Michael Fradette scored 18 points and grabbed 12 rebounds against Westfield on Feb. 8.

PHOTOS BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION



Oakton senior Thomas Tribble scored nine points against Westfield on Feb. 8.

the first of two free throws to give Oakton a 58-55 lead, but missed the second. The ball was knocked toward the sideline and Fradette ended up on the floor, securing the ball in front of the Oakton student section and the Cougars called timeout.

"It was just a loose ball and I went all out for it," Fradette said. "... It's definitely the greatest win of my career."

Tribble scored nine points and took part in some trash talking—something he said he enjoys.

"It's definitely the greatest win of my career."

—Oakton senior Michael Fradette

"I feel like it just helps my teammates get more into the game and be more confident in themselves that [the opponents are] not intimidating me," Tribble said. "I just try to get in other people's heads."

Even fans chanted Tribble's name across the gym at one another as the schools' student sections engaged in a war of words. Tribble's highlight came in the third quarter when he buried a 3-pointer after Hill, who was guarding Tribble and engaging in some trash talk with the Oakton guard, slipped and fell.

Hill finished with a game-high of 23 points.

"[Hill] played a hell of a game," Tribble said, "but not good enough."

With the loss, Westfield received the No. 4 seed and played No. 5 Chantilly in the opening round of the Concorde District tournament on Tuesday, after the Connection's deadline.

"It was just a lot of hostility," Hill said about playing against Oakton. "We're known rivals, so it was a big game for us. Everybody was talking trash, but the main focus was to win the game and we just couldn't come through."

TreVon Walton scored 18 points for Westfield and Christian Gray added 10.

No. 2 Oakton will play the winner of No. 3 Robinson and No. 6 Centreville in the district tournament semifinals at 7:15 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 14, at Robinson Secondary School.

SPORTS ROUNDUPS

Herndon Boys' Basketball Seeded No. 1

The Herndon boys' basketball team earned the No. 1 seed in the Concorde District tournament and received a berth in the Northern Region tournament.

The Hornets finished atop the district with a 7-3 record and had their five-game winning streak snapped with a 67-65 loss to Robinson in the regular-season finale on Feb. 8.

Herndon will face the winner of No. 4 Westfield and No. 5 Chantilly in the district semifinals at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 14, at Robinson Secondary School.

South Lakes Girls' Basketball Athletes Honored

Six members of the South Lakes girls' basketball team received all-district honors this season.

Junior center Abigail Rendle and junior guard Caitlin Jenson garnered first-team All-Liberty District accolades. Sophomore forward Princess Aghayere was named to the second team, senior guard/forward Gabrielle Schultz and junior guard Sash Sprei garnered honorable mention and senior guard/forward Mary Severin made the district's all-defensive team.

South Lakes earned the No. 1 seed in the Liberty District tournament and faced No. 8 Marshall on Tuesday, Feb. 12, after the Connection's deadline.

Herndon's Strangfeld, Hayden Compete at Gymnastics Regionals

Herndon's Sarah Strangfeld and Kellie Hayden competed at the Northern Region gymnastics meet on Feb. 6 at Lake Braddock Secondary School.

Hayden tied for 17th on bars with a score of 8.75. She tied for 24th on beam (8.5) and vault (8.7).

Strangfeld tied for 27th on bars with a score of 8.2.

South Lakes' Shuey Just Misses Cut On Floor

South Lakes' Jasmine Shuey finished 11th on floor at the Northern Region gymnastics meet on Feb. 6 at Lake Braddock Secondary School. The top eight finishers in each event earn berth in the state meet.

Shuey finished 28th on beam with a score of 8.375.

Herndon High Presents 'Hansel and Gretel'

Annual children's production tells classic fairy tale.

BY ALEX McVEIGH
THE CONNECTION

The Herndon High School Theater Department will present their annual children's show starting Friday, Feb. 15, featuring "Hansel and Gretel." In addition to being meant for a younger audience, the school's annual children's show is a way for underclassmen to take their first foray into high school drama.

The fairy tale tells the story of a brother and sister, abandoned by their father, who wander into a witch's lair and must escape before they become her meal.

For freshman Mathew Stanley, this was a first chance to perform onstage. He was a tech in December's production of "Brigadoon," but this play helped him find a presence onstage.

"It's sort of fun being able to play a little boy and be goofy with a lot of physicality and over-the-top acting," he said. "Plus I learned a lot about projecting and working onstage, really putting myself out there."

THE PART OF HANSEL is played by freshman Nathan Burns, who is making his first appearance as a lead.

"I had fun playing a sort of whiny brat who's always complaining and hungry. I like to think that's a new role for me, but I think my older brothers might disagree," he said. "My favorite scene is when the witch is yelling at her goblins for screwing something up, and she's so cruel to them, and they just sink down and get sad, it's a very funny moment."

Freshman Anna Hughes, who plays Susie, said she learned a lot about being onstage in front of a crowd.

"I've never really had stage fright before, but I did get a little nervous at first, until I learned to have fun with it," she said. "I learned a lot about keeping a stage presence and how to move the right way, and I think that will help me out a lot in future productions."

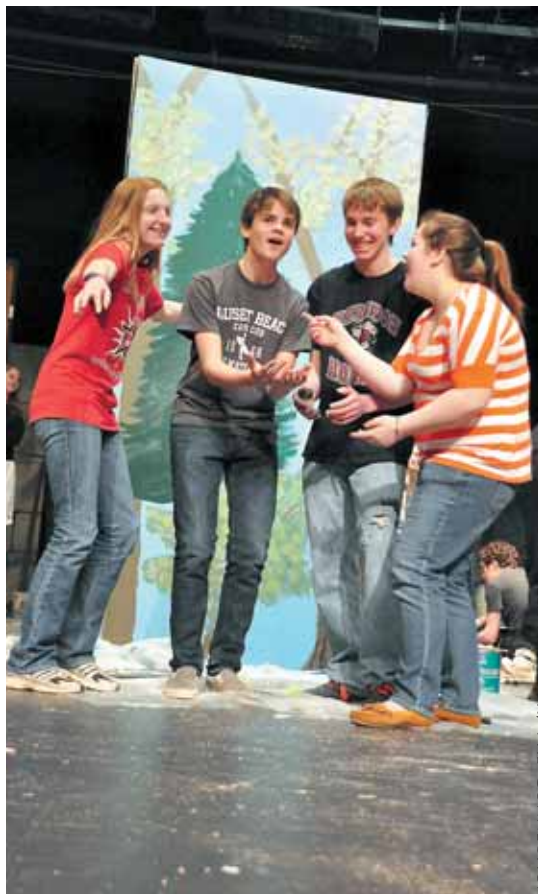
Some younger cast members have performed with Herndon High School when they were younger as students at Herndon Middle.

"I did 'Fiddler on the Roof' when I was in seventh grade, and that was with a lot of the people who are still in this department, which made it fun," said freshman Brenna Emery, who plays the Owl. "It's fun watching people get comfortable in their roles and learn to have fun up there."

From a set design standpoint, the tech crew felt it was important to keep members of the audience, who are younger than the typical Herndon High School crowd, engaged.

"We tried to keep sets simple to keep children and parents entertained, and we tried to make the designs very animated, funny and colorful," said senior Cameron Kelly, the stage manager for the production. "I'm usually a tech guy, so this was a fun way to be able to work with actors."

Unlike the department's bigger productions in the fall and spring, the children's show gives the crew about two weeks to pull everything together,



From left, Brenna Emery, Nathan Burns, Matthew Stanley and Anne Hughes, actors in Herndon High School's production of "Hansel and Gretel" rehearse a scene.

all while sharing the stage with the cast and other organizations at the school.

"The whole idea of a simple set is to minimize time between scenes, because if that takes too long, we'll start losing the attention of the audience, we want scenes to flow together smoothly with minimal delay," said junior Hunter Robinson, the tech director. "We also tried to keep it basic, with only a few pieces, because kids can use their imagination to fill in the rest, and that makes it a more interactive show."

Costume designer Hannah Coyne, a senior, said she enjoyed the challenge of trying to make the costumes fun to look at, while maintaining the character of the original tale.

"It's a Grimm's fairy tale, so I was definitely interested in going back to the original German-style costumes. There's no lederhosen, but it's close," she said. "My favorite part of this process is putting everything together over the course of a few weeks, and seeing it all come together by the time we get to dress rehearsal. The witch's costume was a lot of fun, because you can make it as crazy looking as you like."

HERNDON HIGH SCHOOL'S PRODUCTION of "Hansel and Gretel" will be performed Friday, Feb. 15, at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, Feb. 16, at 10 a.m. at the Herndon High School auditorium. Tickets are \$5 and can be purchased at the door.



Mill Run

Mill Run Harmonies at Holy Cross

A traditional bluegrass band featuring vocal harmonies, original songs and complex instrumentals plays Saturday, Feb. 16, at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, 1090 Sterling Road, Herndon. \$12; children 12 and younger, free. 703-435-8377 or www.millrunbluegrass.intuitwebsites.com.

Send announcements to reston@connectionnewspapers.com. Deadline is Thursday for the following week's paper. Photos/artwork encouraged. For additional listings, visit www.connectionnewspapers.com.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 13

Baby Steps Storytime. 10:30 a.m., at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Interactive storytime for you and your child; 12-23 months with adult. <https://va.evanced.info/fairfaxcounty/lib/eventcalendar.asp>.

Open Mic Night. 9:30 p.m.-1:30 a.m. Jimmy's Old Town Tavern, 697 Spring St., Herndon. Every Wednesday. Register your band at BluesSlide@aol.com or 703-593-5206. www.jimmystavern.com.

THURSDAY/FEB. 14

Horse-drawn Carriage Rides. 4-8 p.m., in front of Talbots, on Market St., 11888 Market St., Reston. Rides all evening, rain or shine; proceeds benefit March of Dimes. \$5 per person; children under 5 ride free. www.restontowncenter.com.

Four Course Valentine's Day Dinners. 5-10 p.m., at Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St., Reston. Get casual-chic and sit down to a prix-fixe candle-lit dinner with many choices to compose your three or four course meal. \$95 per person at Vinifera; \$59 per person at Market Street Bar & Grill; \$45.95 at Paolo's. www.restontowncenter.com.

FRIDAY/FEB. 15

Environmental Film: Home. 7-9 p.m., at the Walker Nature Center, 11450 Glade Drive, Reston. Award-winning photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand and narrator Glenn Close guide an aerial tour of 54 countries, highlighting problems and beauty on earth; post-film discussion. Reservations. \$5. 703-435-6510 or www.reston.org.

Bowling for Columbine. 7 p.m., at United Christian Parish, 11508 North Shore Dr., Reston. A showing of the Academy Award-winning documentary film about gun violence in America, by Michael Moore; the film explores the nature and relationship of guns, violence and racism. 703-620-3065. www.oaktonathletics.org/index.cfm?action=mainthread&contentid=266526.

SATURDAY/FEB. 16

Robin Hood. 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., at the Industrial Strength Theatre, 269 Sunset Park Drive, Herndon. The Elden Street Players present the classic tale with some questions to raise, too: who is Lady Merle of Cornwall and is the Sheriff of Nottingham a married man? Hood must keep Marian from marrying the wrong guy, defeat the sheriff and

secure Nottingham. \$8. www.eldenstreetplayers.org/box-office.

Calabrian Wine Tasting. 4 p.m., at Il Fornaio, 11990 Market St., Suite 106, Reston. Five 3-ounce pours paired with appetizers. Reservations. \$25. 703-437-5544 or banquets.reston@ilfo.com.

Open MIC. 7 p.m., at ArtSpace Herndon, 750 Center St., Herndon. Singers, dancers, instrumentalists, poets and the like in fifth grade through adulthood perform; refreshments provided. \$5 per person/act. 703-415-6218 or 540-454-5816.

Mill Run. 7:30 p.m., at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, 1090 Sterling Road, Herndon. A traditional bluegrass band featuring vocal harmonies, original songs and complex instrumentals. \$12; children 12 and younger, free. 703-435-8377 or www.millrunbluegrass.intuitwebsites.com.

SUNDAY/FEB. 17

Beale Street Puppet Show. 11-11:45 a.m., at the Herndon Community Center, 814 Ferndale Ave., Herndon. A variety show featuring hand and rod puppets, Paddy Hobark and his dog Tuxedo, his cat Silky and a mischievous monkey named Jogi on their search for the colors of the rainbow. \$4 in advance; \$5 at the door. www.herndon-va.gov.

Robin Hood. 2 p.m., at the Industrial Strength Theatre, 269 Sunset Park Drive, Herndon. The Elden Street Players present the classic tale with some questions to raise, too: who is Lady Merle of Cornwall and is the Sheriff of Nottingham a married man? Hood must keep Marian from marrying the wrong guy, defeat the sheriff and secure Nottingham. \$8. www.eldenstreetplayers.org/box-office.

SATURDAY/FEB. 23

Cooking Class. Noon, at Il Fornaio, 11990 Market St., Suite 106, Reston. A three-course lunch with wine and recipes. Reservations. \$45. 703-437-5544 or banquets.reston@ilfo.com.

TUESDAY/FEB. 26

The Stray Birds. 7:15 p.m., at Amphora Diner Deluxe, 1151 Elden St., Herndon. The Folk Club of Reston-Herndon hosts the group voted to the Top 10 Folk & American Albums of 2012 (by NPR). \$11 for members; 12 for non-members. 703-435-2402 or DAHurdSr@cs.com.

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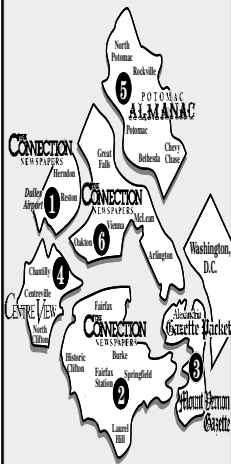
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Warranty Warranted?



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

For life, absolutely! As to what happens to my mattress in 10 years or my television in five years – as but a few examples, pales in comparison to what I worry (you'll note I didn't say anticipate) will have happened to me in five or 10 years. Nevertheless, I'd definitely pay extra for that warranty. However, there are no warranties for life, extended or otherwise – and no guarantees either, as I discovered in late February, 2009, when I was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer (or as those of us in the know "acronym it": NSCLC). "Death and taxes," as the old joke says, are the only guarantees. The rest are "hope-to-bees" and "wanna-bees."

A cancer diagnosis (and terminal prognosis – for yours truly, anyway) has a way of sharpening your focus and narrowing your perspective. Initially, after meeting with my oncologist, and for a while thereafter, quite frankly, the three most important people in my life were me, myself and I. For many months post-diagnosis, the three of us didn't care or consider – too much, about what might happen down the road, a road never before traveled. Life's discussions – and decisions – were all about the here and now, not the there and later. What might have been was replaced with what it is and what are you going to do about it.

However, as life – and I, have continued, so too has my understanding and appreciation of my amazing good fortune. To have survived for as long as I have is a blessing and somewhat perplexing to my oncologist. And in that continuing survival and evolution, opportunities have regularly presented themselves that have forced me to consider my past, present and future ("what there is of it"). As much as I don't want to – and quite frankly, prefer not to, have every day-type decisions impacted by my cancer diagnosis, they are. If I didn't/don't consider the context of every decision I make, I would be short-changing myself and forfeiting the future for the present. And even though I had my guarantee pulled in 2009, I'm still trying to live as if anything's possible.

Certainly there are exceptions to every rule, statistical anomalies in every manner of study and research. Life is not a straight line. Sure death is inevitable, but there shouldn't be any hurry to get there. It will happen soon enough (too soon for some), whether you like it or not. Now whether I outlive my mattress or my television or my car is unknown, but as a cancer patient, I sort of think about whether I will or not. This thought process is a problem – for me. It may be a problem of my own making but as far as problems go, it's a Hall-of-Famer. And by that I mean, it dominates.

Garden variety-type decisions become landscape design-type problems. Previously inconsequential, mundane-type presumptive choices become minefields of negative possibilities/regrets. The short version being: do I really need to do that/buy that/warranty that, if I'm not going to be the true beneficiary – meaning/accepting that some of these rather ordinary decisions might not be about me. And for a terminal cancer patient who has often heard "It's all about you, Kenny," on more than one occasion – from more than one person, assimilating an unanticipated future into an apparently productive present where others matter as much if not more than you do, is almost counter-intuitive. Nevertheless, life certainly appears to be worth living; I'm just not sure how much of it I should pay for in advance.

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.

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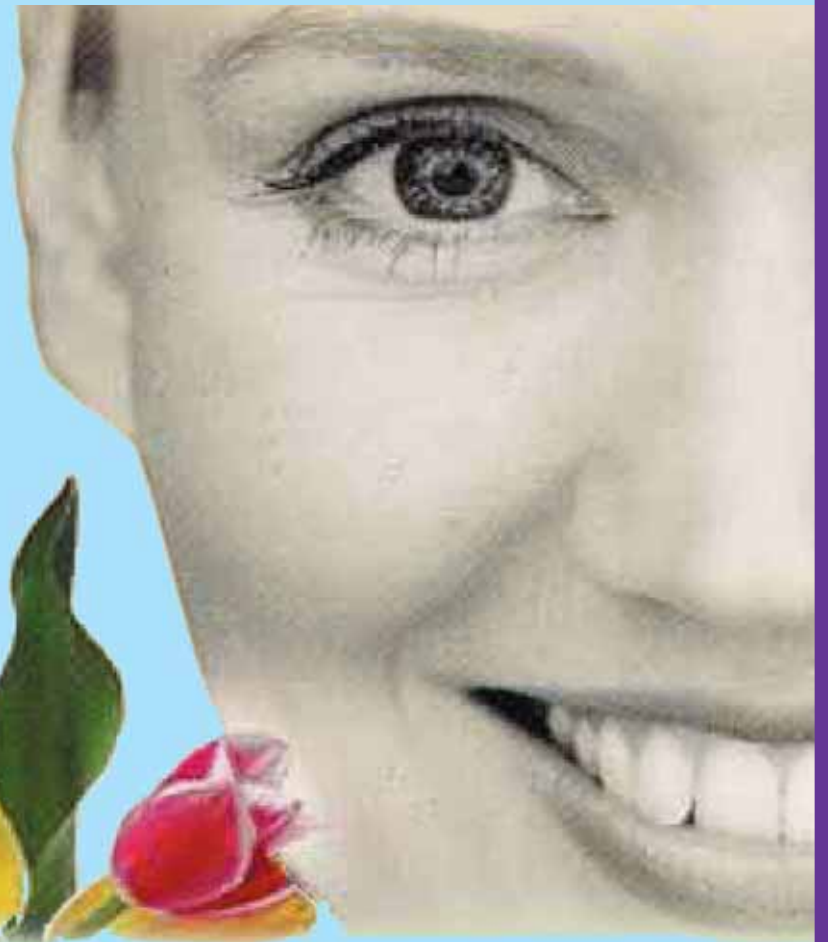
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