

McLean
CONNECTION

Home LifeStyle
PAGE 17

PAGE 10
Holiday
Entertainment
& Gift Guide 2013

McLean Hosts ReinDog Parade

NEWS, PAGE 4

The Doughertys of McLean: Carolyn, Mary Carolyn and Kevin with Gypsy, a German Shepherd during the 17th Annual ReinDog Parade Saturday at the Langley Shopping Center in McLean.

Garza Holds Listening Tour

NEWS, PAGE 3

Holiday Musical Comes to Alden Theatre

NEWS, PAGE 7

OPINION, PAGE 8 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 12 ♦ SPORTS, PAGE 19 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 13

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Speakers line up to voice their concerns to Schools Superintendent Karen Garza at the Listening Tour held Saturday, Dec. 7, at Cooper Middle School in McLean.



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THE CONNECTION

Garza Holds Listening Tour

Schools Superintendent visits Cooper Middle School in McLean.

BY STEVE HIBBARD
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County Schools Superintendent Karen Garza, Ph.D., held a Listening Tour on Saturday, Dec. 7, at Cooper Middle School in McLean where more than 100 residents of the Dranesville District shared their concerns about local schools. The meeting, which was attended by local teachers, principals and parents, included School Board Rep. Janie Strauss (Dranesville).

In the five-and-a-half months she's been in power, Garza has visited 52 schools in the county. When she conducts meetings, she stresses "Pride, Concern and Hope" over the challenges she faces.

Garza oversees a \$2.5 billion budget – where \$500 million goes to the central office and about \$2 billion goes directly to supporting classrooms. That translates to about \$13,564 cost per pupil (FY-2013). She calls the \$137 million projected deficit a "real challenge." The cause for the deficit is that revenues have not kept pace with growing enrollment and increasing costs. The county currently has 184,625 students and enrollment has been growing by more than 15,000 students over the past five years.

Garza said we need to be creative, looking at schedules and course offerings – and "how do we redesign ourselves." She said she will avoid student programming, and on Jan. 9, she will present the new budget to the Board of Supervisors.

Garza hails from Lubbock, Texas, and oversaw two school systems in Houston. When Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans in 2005, she organized the 8,500 students seeking refuge in Texas schools in just a few days.

ONE BY ONE residents took to the microphone at Cooper Middle School as Garza listened to their issues. The No. 1 concern was classroom overcrowding – what Garza said was the "most pressing challenge." The actual FCPS class sizes are: 29 students in first grade; 30 in second grade; and 35 in fourth grade.

One PE. teacher said she has 44 students in one class, and cited safety as a major concern. As a re-



Schools Superintendent Karen Garza speaks at her Listening Tour on Saturday, Dec. 7, at Cooper Middle School in McLean.

sult, she has to incorporate "creative techniques" to adapt. One parent lamented how her daughter's gym class consists of "sitting on the line," waiting for her turn to participate in activities.

Another parent said it's time to establish caps on classroom class size. "Large classrooms deprive them of a quality baseline education," she said.

Garza agreed, saying she spends a lot of time on the overcrowding issue. "Our money has gotten tighter and tighter over time. There's not a lot of fluff left over." She said the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors controls the money decisions, with about 15 percent of school funding coming from the state. She told parents to talk to their elected officials about how much money should be allotted for schools.

An art teacher said that school art programs are slowly becoming "dismantled," and former art galleries that once displayed students' artwork have been converted into spirit-wear stores.

One parent pushed for more funding for special-ed programs, especially with autism on the rise, and teachers having limited resources. "Special-ed should not be cut with the rise in autism," she said.

Another parent said large class sizes "impede ac-

SEE SUPERINTENDENT, PAGE 5

Online Launch for 2013 Wish List Project

Being a Wish List "Angel" easier than ever before in 14 year history of The Wish List Project.

BY JEAN T. JIANOS
THE CONNECTION

With a little help from her friends, Great Falls resident Ginger Mahon, founder of The Wish List Project, has taken The Wish List high-tech. A Wish List "Angel," donor Lissa Perez, assisted Mahon with building online sign up capability for The 2013 Wish List Project on the website "SignUp Genius." Perez is a Great Falls resident and partner at Deloitte & Touche, LLP.

Now Wish List Angels are sent email invitations and the link to sign up for any of the holiday gift items requested by families in area shelters and teens in Fairfax County foster care. In her email announcing the new online capability, Mahon says,

"This year (our 14th year making a difference!) will bring a new and exciting way for ALL to see the Wish List requests, choose and donate. You will receive all the information: easy to share with family, friends and office mates with just a 'click' using SignUp Genius link . . . YOU are going to make this an amazing year for children and families in need this holiday!"

Once again, The Wish List Project is part of Paisano's "Share the Pie" campaign. Paisano's "Pizza, Pasta, Subs, Strombolis, Wings & More," with locations in Reston, Vienna and Herndon, will donate 10 percent of any order on Sunday,

Dec. 15 that mentions "The Wish List." 100 percent of donations will go directly to The Wish List.

Another Wish List Angel and donor of the past 14 years, Patrick Devlin of Great Falls, has already delivered bins that are ready and waiting for the donated gifts that will be dropped-off no later than Saturday, Dec. 14.



PHOTO BY JEAN T. JIANOS/THE CONNECTION

The 2013 Wish List Project sign up on signupgenius.com is a user-friendly way to donate holiday gift items requested by families in area shelters and teens in Fairfax County foster care.

The visual impact of the online list re-emphasizes the enormous need that The Wish List has fulfilled for the past 14 years, benefiting over 325 gift recipients last year. The list of gifts already pledged is impressive, but there are items requested by families and foster teens still to be selected and donated. You really don't have to be a genius, just generous. Contact Mahon at gingermahon@aol.com for the email invitation and signupgenius.com link.

Contestants line up for the ReinDog Parade at the Langley Shopping Center with Santa on the fire truck.



PHOTOS BY STEVE HIBBARD/THE CONNECTION

McLean Hosts ReinDog Parade

Dog owners display spruced up pooches in their holiday finest.

McLean's finest pooches donned holiday apparel and paraded around during the 17th Annual ReinDog Parade Saturday at the Langley Shopping Center in McLean. Dignitaries included Santa on a fire truck, Peggy Fox of WUSA-TV Channel 9, and Supervisor John Foust. The dogs were judged in the following categories: small, medium, large and other (one cat). Celebrity judges included Dr. Kate Salkeld, DVM; Dr. Craig Felton, DVM; and Supervisor Foust. The entry fee was two cans of dog food that was donated to the Humane Society of Fairfax County.

— STEVE HIBBARD



Aaron Scruggs of McLean with Isla, Cailin and Lachlan, and their dog Otis, an English Bulldog.



Winning Best in Show was Sonya Frederick of McLean with Murphy, a mix-Poodle-Shih Tzu.



Cathy Colglazier of McLean with Carl, a Cocker Spaniel.



Callie Edwards of McLean with Bailey, a Chow mix.



Kathy Smith of McLean with Gracie Smith, a Bullmastiff.

Superintendent Comes to McLean

FROM PAGE 3

cess” for children with special needs, and kids with disabilities like ADHD are “getting lost in the system,” and require that parents spend money on private tutors.

Another parent complained how student’s progress reports (report cards) focus more on student behavior than on academic metrics.

Garza praised the county’s FLES foreign language program that’s currently offered in 40 out of 140 schools. She touted 47 percent of Fairfax County graduates who are fluent in a second language.

Marsha Sharon, a former special-ed teacher who transferred to teaching FLES, added: “I’d hate to see this wonderful program gone ... It’s a global world now.”

Regarding the early 7:25 a.m. start time, student Robert Miller said he doesn’t want to change it because getting home from school later will allow him less time to do homework. A parent agreed, saying to leave the bell schedule alone

or he’ll have to pay for 20 extra minutes of early childcare due to his demanding work schedule.

ONE PARENT lamented about teacher’s heavy workload, saying teachers are spending more time on administrative tasks and working more hours without extra pay. “Seventy percent of the teachers at McLean High have to have second jobs,” she said. “They’re being asked to do more and more for less — in larger classrooms.”

Garza is proud of her ongoing “Portrait of a Graduate,” where a committee of 70 stakeholders is drafting a document to communicate their expectations for the school system — a tool that will help measure learning and teaching. “This is what our community expects of our schools,” she said. “It will help us craft conversations,” she said of the draft, which is due in February.

And as for goals, Garza said: “My primary goal is to be out in the schools as much as possible.”

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News

Weichert, Realtors' Recognizes the McLean/Dolley Madison Office, Top Associate

Bruce L. Green, regional vice president of Weichert, Realtors, announced the McLean/Dolley Madison office was recognized for outstanding performance in October. The office led the entire company in dollar volume, the company and the region in resale dollar volume, as well as the region, which comprises offices throughout Fairfax, Loudoun, Fauquier and Delaware counties, for resales and resale revenue units.

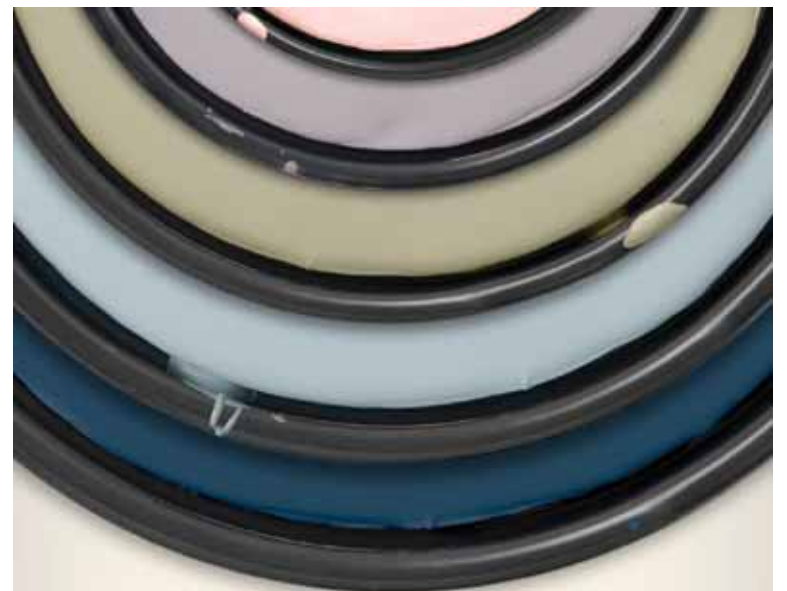
Additionally, Sales Associate J.D. Callander of the McLean/Dolley Madison office was individually recognized for her exceptional industry success during the month of October. A top producer, Callander led the region for resale revenue units and resale dollar volume.

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J.D. Callander.

specialist in to learn about the real estate services that Weichert, Realtors has to offer. She can be reached in Weichert's McLean/Dolley Madison office at 1313 Dolley Madison Boulevard or by phone at 703-760-8880.



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NEWS

Holiday Musical Comes to Alden Theatre

Theatre IV's production of "The Shoemaker and the Christmas Elves" will be presented at The Alden in McLean, as part of its McLean Kids Performance Series, at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 14. Tickets are \$15, \$10 for McLean tax district residents. The theatre is located at 1234 Ingleside Avenue, inside the McLean Community Center.

A heartwarming, holiday musical, Theatre IV's show puts a yuletide spin on the classic Brothers Grimm fairy tale. Two elves are sent to work for a poor cobbler until he does something nice for them. When he does, they will become true Christmas Elves and be sent to work for Santa at the North Pole. Based on the story by the Grimm Brothers, the book, music and lyrics are by Paul Deiss. Audience members will delight in this magical story of a poor shoemaker and the magical elves that show him the true meaning of Christmas. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/17JW4IX>.

Tickets are on sale now. Dis-



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

'The Shoemaker and the Christmas Elves' will be presented at The Alden in McLean on Saturday, Dec. 14.

counts are available to seniors, students and groups of eight or more. For more information or to pur-

chase tickets online, visit: www.aldentheatre.org or call 703-790-0123.



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OPINION

Happy Holidays, Safely

SoberRide safety net, 1-800-200-TAXI.

Holiday party season is well under way, along with winter weather advisories. It's up to individuals to make good decisions about celebrations that involve alcohol and how to handle transportation.

Plan to abstain. Plan to celebrate at home or someplace where you will be comfortable for some period of time. Plan to bring a designated driver. Plan to take public transportation. And if all of that fails, the Washington Regional Alcohol Project has a safety net for you.

WRAP, a local nonprofit organization, will offer free cab rides to would-be drunk drivers throughout Northern Virginia during the winter holidays.

More than 10,000 died in drunk driving related accidents in 2010. Tens of thousands

more were injured. Holidays lead to an increase in impaired driving, the Christmas and New Year season in particular.

The annual Holiday SoberRide program will operate nightly from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. starting Friday, Dec. 13, 2013, and continuing until Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2014 as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers during this traditionally high-risk, holiday period.

During these times, area residents celebrating with alcohol can call the toll-free SoberRide phone number 1-800-200-TAXI for a no-cost (up to \$30 fare), safe way home.

Callers will be responsible for fare amounts over \$30. Last December 1,927 people took advantage of this program. On New Year's Eve alone, 387 people call on SoberRide for a safe trip home.

SoberRide is offered in throughout the Northern Virginia and Maryland suburbs. In these areas, local taxicab companies will be providing this no-cost service to local residents

age 21 and older who might otherwise have attempted to drive home after drinking.

Since 1993, WRAP's SoberRide program has provided 58,576 free cab rides home to would-be drunk drivers in the Greater Washington area.

We know that many young people over 21 are living at home with parents, or will be visiting for the holidays. Parents, be brave. Have a conversation with your children whether they are under or over 21. Be sure those over 21 have a plan, and are equipped with the SoberRide number.

SoberRide is not available for underage drinkers, but parents still should talk to their children about their plans, and tell them out loud that you expect them not to drive impaired and not to get into a car with an impaired driver. Tell them to call, and you'll come get them if necessary.

It's a good time for a conversation about the risks of drinking to excess beyond drinking and driving as well.

One Year Since Newtown – It's Time for Congress to Act

BY MARTINA LEINZ

A few months ago, I met the father of one of the first-graders murdered at Sandy Hook Elementary School. I expressed how sorry I was for his loss and how grateful I was that he had found the strength to fight for sensible gun laws in an attempt to spare other families the pain he has suffered. What I did not share, because it did not seem appropriate, was just how deeply I was grieving too. None of those children were mine, but they all felt like mine. They were America's children.

I don't believe I am alone in these feelings. The carnage at Sandy Hook Elementary School one year ago (Dec. 14, 2012) was devastating not just to the families and community of Newtown, Conn., but to the entire nation. Twenty first-graders and six educators were murdered by a deranged individual in possession of dangerous weapons that he never should have had. It affected us all.

We will never fully recover from this tragedy as individuals or as a nation but there is much that Congress can do to prevent other tragedies like this from occurring. A critically important step is to enact sensible legislation to require background checks on all gun sales.

Many people incorrectly assume that we already conduct universal

background checks on gun purchasers but the Brady law, enacted 20 years ago, only covers about 60 percent of gun sales. It does not cover online purchases, sales through classified ads or transactions by private sellers at gun shows. This leaves the door wide open for criminals, terrorists, domestic abusers and those adjudicated mentally ill to purchase guns without having to pass a background check.

Imagine if the FDA only screened 60 percent of pharmaceutical drugs and allowed the other 40 percent to hit store shelves with no testing, no screening, and no questions asked. It does not sound very safe, does it? Well, that is exactly the scenario we face with gun purchases in this country.

Our children deserve better than 60 percent when it comes to background checks. This is because like FDA testing, when done completely, background checks work. Since President Clinton signed the Brady bill into law, background checks have blocked more than 2 million purchases, keeping guns away from convicted felons and other dangerous people.

It is now time for Congress to finish the job and expand Brady background checks to cover all gun sales. A bipartisan bill, H.R. 1565, the Public Safety and Second Amendment Rights Protection Act of 2013, has been introduced

in the House that would do just that. It has already been co-sponsored by 186 Representatives including Congressmen Connolly, Moran, and Scott of Virginia. None of the Republican Representatives from Virginia have yet co-sponsored this important legislation. Hopefully they will soon.

This is not a partisan issue, nor is it a Second Amendment issue. There is nothing inconsistent with respecting the right for law-abiding citizens to own guns while trying to keep them out of the hands of dangerous individuals. More than 90 percent of Americans support extending background checks including over 80 percent of responsible gun owners and NRA members. It is time for Congress to listen to the public and enact

sensible solutions meant to reduce the number of gun deaths. In a country where gun violence kills more than thirty-one thousand people a year, sixty percent is not getting the job done.

To commemorate the lives taken in Newtown and the more than 32 people killed by guns each day in the United States, Congress should act now and require that background checks be conducted on all commercial gun sales. Keeping guns away from dangerous individuals is an important step to curbing the epidemic of gun violence devastating our country.

Martina Leinz is President, Million Mom March, Northern Virginia Chapter, the grassroots wing of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence.

Humanity at Its Finest

To the Editor:

Thank you to the ladies and police of Vienna who gave support and encouragement to a handicapped old lady whose walker tipped and she ended up waiting an hour in the street for an ambulance. This was kindness and comfort way beyond the call of duty. Thank you for examples of humanity at its finest.

Gratefully,

Clare Schwartz
Oakton

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NEWS DEPARTMENT:
To discuss ideas and concerns,
Call: 703-778-9410
e-mail:
mclean@connectionnewspapers.com

Kemal Kurspahic
Editor ♦ 703-778-9414
kemal@connectionnewspapers.com

Amna Rehmatulla
Editorial Assistant
703-778-9441
amna@connectionnewspapers.com

Alex McVeigh
Community Reporter ♦ 703-778-9441
amcveigh@connectionnewspapers.com
[@AMcVeighConnect](https://twitter.com/AMcVeighConnect)

Victoria Ross
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Debbie Funk
National Sales
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debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

Editor & Publisher
Mary Kimm
703-778-9433
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com
[@MaryKimm](https://twitter.com/MaryKimm)

Executive Vice President
Jerry Vernon
jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

Editor in Chief
Steven Mauren
Managing Editor
Kemal Kurspahic
Photography:
Deb Cobb, Louise Krafft,
Craig Sterbutzel
Art/Design:
Laurence Foong, John Heinly
Production Manager:
Jean Card
Geovani Flores

Special Assistant to the Publisher
Jeanne Theismann
703-778-9436
jtheismann@connectionnewspapers.com
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CIRCULATION: 703-778-9426
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News

Teen Center Offers Winter Break Trips

The Old Firehouse Teen Center (OFTC), a satellite program of the McLean Community Center (MCC), is offering day trips for 5th through 9th graders during Fairfax County Public Schools' winter break. The center will be open daily from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. The trips will depart and return from OFTC, which is located at 1440 Chain Bridge Road.

The Winter Break Trips are:
Ripleys Believe It or Not Odditorium Baltimore plus Hard Rock Café, Thursday, Dec. 26, 9:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.

\$48/\$42 MCC district residents
Newseum, Pizza at Fuel plus Regal Gallery Place Cinemas in Washington, D.C., Friday, Dec. 27, 9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

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Meet Henry Lopez, 2013 National Boys & Girls Clubs Virginia Youth of the Year, who grew up with the BGCGW Culmore Character Club for 14 years. Henry now attends George Mason University on an Honor Scholarship studying computer engineering.

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HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Gifts for the Foodie in Your Life

Local gourmets share their favorite products for the food lovers on your list.

By MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Whether you're shopping for a seasoned cook or a budding culinary enthusiast, buying presents for a foodie can be a daunting task. What's the best pan? The coolest gadget? The latest trend in desserts? Local gourmets come to the rescue with culinary goodies to entice even the most discerning of food aficionados.

Nancy Pollard, owner of La Cuisine in Old Town Alexandria, suggests the Thermapen cooking thermometer. "This is clearly the best probe thermometer on the market," said Pollard. "It has gotten a lot of kudos from chefs and test kitchens."

Also on Pollard's list are mortars and pestles made from Carrara marble. "We buy these in Carrara, Italy," said Pollard. "They are made of pure white Carrara marble so it is so much easier to see what you are doing.

The one that that is particularly useful is 22 centimeters because it is big enough to make mayonnaise, pesto and other sauces."

Chopping vegetables can even be made more interesting with a custom made cutting board, says Lenora Lawson chef faculty at The International Culinary School at The Art Institute of Washington in Arlington. "You can get a cutting board in the shape of your home shape or even a cutting board that has Van Gogh's art on it."

When it comes to kitchen tools, "I'd suggest a nonstick baking mat ... a lovely wooden French rolling pin, a beautiful olive wood cheese board — with a cheese for sampling, of course — or a fun, colorful, Swiss-made Kuhn paring knife," said Nichole Ferrigno, a certified holistic health coach and chef at L'Academie de Cuisine in Bethesda. "It comes in lots of bright colors and with a safety sheath, making it a great addition to a picnic basket."

Culinary instructor Andie Nelson of Cre-

ative Kids Kitchen, LLC in Arlington, says her top recommendation is a Vitamix blender. "[This is] the blender that seems to have become a religion among foodies," she said. "This big-ticket item would definitely make any foodie or health-conscious person very, very happy. It even makes soup."

ANOTHER GIFT SUGGESTION on Nelson's list is aimed at helping save a few trees while adding an elegant touch to the kitchen. "I think that having great linens in the kitchen is highly under-rated," she said. "Many cooks buy lots and lots of paper towels, but I can tell you that having a great set of dish towels — French dish towels are the best — can be a worthwhile and beautiful investment for the kitchen."

Help keep clothing stains at bay with an apron by Marcy Butler Designs. "This is a local designer," said Pollard. "The aprons are made from Italian linen, but they were made in the United States."

If your foodie prefers cookbooks, sweet treats abound in "Fat Witch Brownies: Brownies, Blondies, and Bars" from New York's Legendary Fat Witch Bakery by Patricia Holding. "This book has great reci-

pes for brownies," said Pollard. "We usually suggest that people give this book along with a set of Italian seven-inch disposable square pans. Her recipes will make two perfect square pans of brownies and you can put one in the freezer."

For young cooks, Pollard suggests "Best Lunch Box Ever: Ideas and Recipes for School Lunches Kids Will Love" by Katie Sullivan Morford. "This is a great book for teenagers or anyone over the age of 7," said Pollard. "It encourages them to make their own lunches for school."

Pollard also suggests "The Washington Post Cookbook," curated and edited by Bonnie Benwick, the deputy food editor of the Washington Post. Pollard herself created three of the recipes, including two for Thanksgiving. She says one of her favorite recipes is the Man Catcher Brownies, which she created.

Another interesting read, says Pollard, is "The Billionaire's Vinegar: The Mystery of the World's Most Expensive Bottle of Wine" by Benjamin Wallace. The book tells a true story of a 1787 Château Lafite Bordeaux — supposedly owned by Thomas Jefferson — that sold for \$156,000 at auction.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LA CUISINE

A black, Italian linen apron, like this one by Marcy Butler Designs, will help your food lover's clothes stay clean during meal preparation.

Ferrigno suggests going a step beyond cookbooks and sending your foodie back to school. "There is such an array of options



Nancy Pollard, of La Cuisine in Alexandria, suggests giving the food lover in your life a mortar and pestle made from white Carrara marble.

available," she said. "One could sign up for a knife skills class, a topic specific class like 'puff pastry,' or something more fun and experience oriented, like a couples cooking

class, or 'girls' night out.' This is such a fun gift."

CONSUMABLE GIFTS are also on

"A Thermapen cooking thermometer is clearly the best probe thermometer on the market. It has gotten a lot of kudos from chefs and test kitchens."

— Nancy Pollard, owner of La Cuisine in Old Town Alexandria

Ferrigno's list: "A bottle of good Champagne or Scotch, beautiful pink or grey sea salts, a spice collection ... or a box of homemade baked goodies" are always hits, she said.

For beer lovers, Lawson suggests a beer brewing kit. "It is something different," she said. "Rather than buying beer, they can make their own and appreciate the beer-making process."

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PHOTO BY WALT LAWRENCE

An image of a Mute Swan printed on canvas will be on exhibit at the annual Great Falls Studios Holiday Art Show and Sale.

Holiday Art Show and Sale Moves to Wolf Trap

This year the annual Great Falls Studios Holiday Art Show and Sale will be held at the Center for Education at Wolf Trap on Dec. 14 & 15, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. Because of this new larger venue more than 30 members are able to

participate in this event. The Center is located at 1645 Trap Road in Vienna.

Great Falls photographer Walt Lawrence will be featuring his waterscape and bird images that he has taken from a boat on the Potomac.



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FRIDAY/DEC. 13

Free Concert & Living Nativity.
 6:30-8:30 p.m. 1545 Chain Bridge Road, McLean.

\$75 per person. Reservations required. 703-917-5498.

6:30 p.m. GF School of Art, 1144 Walker Road, Suite D, Great Falls. \$50 fee (includes all supplies).

SATURDAY/DEC. 14

Welcoming Santa Claus. 1-3 p.m. Freeman Store, 131 Church Street, NE, Vienna. Capture that perfect holiday photo with Santa. www.historicviennainc.org.

"The Shoemaker & the Christmas Elves." 2 p.m. The Alden Theater, 1234 Ingleside Avenue, McLean. A holiday musical, Theatre IV's show puts a yuletide spin on the classic Brothers Grimm fairy tale. <http://bit.ly/17JW4IX>.

Santa Coming to Colvin Run Mill. 3-6 p.m. Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Visit Santa, stay warm with a bonfire and roasted marshmallows, and make a family craft. \$5 per person.

SATURDAY/DEC. 14, 21

Gingerbread House Decorating Class. 10 a.m. or 1 p.m. at the Ritz Carlton, 1700 Tysons Blvd., McLean. Learn to make your own gingerbread house. \$70 per child, ages 2-12. Reservations required. 703-917-5498.

SATURDAY/DEC. 14-SUNDAY/DEC. 15

Great Falls Studios Holiday Show and Sale. Wolf Trap Center for Education, 1645 Trap Road, Vienna. This annual show includes paintings, pottery, traditional and digital photographs, jewelry, drawings, art quilts, and hand pulled lithographic prints, plus artful gifts and cards.

SATURDAY/DEC. 14, 21

The Nutcracker Tea. 10 a.m. or 1 p.m. at the Ritz Carlton, 1700 Tysons Blvd., McLean. Watch the ballet production of "The Nutcracker" while enjoying afternoon tea and treats.

SUNDAY/DEC. 15

Welcoming Santa Claus. 1-3 p.m. Freeman Store, 131 Church Street, NE, Vienna. Capture that perfect holiday photo with Santa. www.historicviennainc.org.

SUNDAY/DEC. 15, 22

Gingerbread House Decorating Class. 10 a.m. or 1 p.m. at the Ritz Carlton, 1700 Tysons Blvd., McLean. Learn to make your own gingerbread house. \$70 per child, ages 2-12. Reservations required. 703-917-5498.

SUNDAY/DEC. 15, 22

The Princess Tea. 11 a.m. or 2 p.m. at the Ritz Carlton, 1700 Tysons Blvd., McLean. Watch a theatrical production feature Disney princesses while enjoying afternoon tea and treats. \$75 per person. Children under 2 are free. Reservations required. 703-917-5498.

TUESDAY/DEC. 17

Langley High School Holiday Concert. 7:30 p.m. 6520 Georgetown Pike, McLean. The concert will feature all six Choral Department choirs including Women's Treble, Women's Select Treble, Concert Choir, Women's Chamber Choir, Voicemale and the award-winning Langley Madrigals singing a variety of winter and holiday favorites. Admission is free and the community is welcome to attend.

Gingerbread House Workshop. 4:30-6:30 p.m. GF School of Art, 1144 Walker Road, Suite D, Great Falls. Pre-made houses will be adorned with frosting, candy, and other fun decorations. \$50 fee (includes \$10 supply fee).

Glass Ornament Workshop. 4:30-

SATURDAY/DEC. 21, 22, 28, & 29

Annual Train Display at Colvin Run Mill. Colvin Run Mill Barn, 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Watch G-gauge trains wend their way through a miniature western town in the Colvin Run Barn.

SUNDAY/DEC. 22

A Festival of Lessons & Carols. 9 a.m. & 11:15 a.m. St. John's Episcopal Church, 6715 Georgetown Pike, McLean. Lessons will be read by parishioners, seasonal anthems presented by the choirs, and carols sung by the congregation.

TUESDAY/DEC. 24

St. John's Episcopal Church Christmas Worship Services. 3:30 p.m. 6715 Georgetown Pike, McLean. 703-356-4902. This service is especially designed for families with young children.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 25

Christmas Day Brunch at Entyse Bistro. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Ritz Carlton, 1700 Tysons Blvd., McLean. Celebrate the holiday with brunch. Enjoy live musical entertainment and special activities, including face painting and a balloon artist for the children. \$120 per adult; \$40 for children under 12. Reservations required. 703-917-5498.

TUESDAY/DEC. 31

New Year's Eve at Entyse Bistro. 5:30-10:30 p.m. at the Ritz Carlton, 1700 Tysons Blvd., McLean. Ring in the New Year with a four-course tasting menu, champagne toast and live music. \$135 per person. Reservations required. 703-917-5498.

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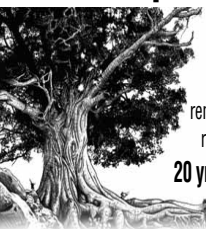


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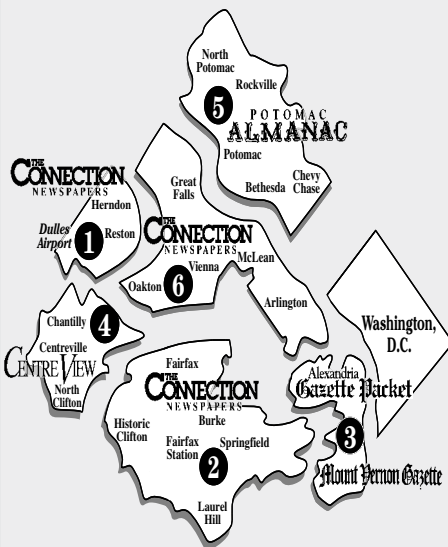
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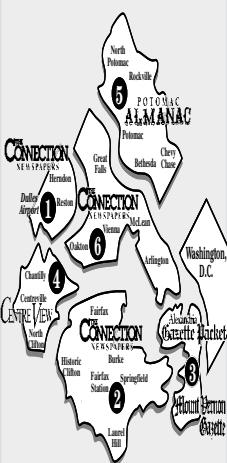
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A "Scancer" Update

By KENNETH B. LOURIE



Since you asked, or rather indulged me the past few weeks by wading through my two "Scanticipation" columns anticipating a result, I am happy to finally share that result with you: "Stable and better." These are the exact words e-mailed to me by my oncologist in response to my post-Thanksgiving inquiry about my CT Scan completed on the 27th. Then, as you most recent Kenny-column readers may recall, I had my regularly scheduled post-scan appointment this past Friday, December 6th to discuss those results, and of course have my oncologist examine and question me about any facts, feelings or failings, concerning the previous three months since my last appointment (and four months since my last scan) as a terminal cancer patient. He's not exactly Hubert H. Humphrey, but nevertheless, he was "pleased as punch." And if there's one dominant recollection I'll take home with me from my appointment, it was my oncologist's ear-to-ear smile when sharing his assessment of all things concerning Kenny-with-cancer.

In fact, and in reality-check truth, if you've been characterized as "terminal" by your doctor, whether "diseased" by cancer or some other deadly condition, and you're still undergoing treatment, there's no better feeling – or hope, quite frankly, than seeing your doctor happy and encouraging when sharing/discussing your most recent diagnostic scan/lab work, urine specimen, etc. And considering that Team Lourie has seen my oncologist with less than positive news on previous occasions, hardly do I ever take it for granted when he's as upbeat and enthusiastic as he was during Friday's appointment.

Unfortunately, the process is ongoing and subject to change; after all, stage IV, non-small cell lung cancer is incurable/inoperable. But I am finding out that at least for me/for awhile, it is/can be treatable, albeit non-surgically. Moreover, as long as my body continues to tolerate the every-three-week chemotherapy infusions, I am good to go, or as described by my oncologist: on maintenance. Meaning, we can continue to do this for awhile. And though "awhile" is never defined or discussed, really, given the predictable/unpredictable nature of cancer – and its interactions with the diagnosee, I can live with the indeterminate sentence that I've been fortunate to receive. It certainly beats the alternative.

Originally, I was "prognosed" to live "13 months to two years" by my oncologist. As of November 27th, I have lived four years and 9 months, so I am accustomed to being life-expectancy challenged. And since I've surpassed my oncologist's initial prognosis by years, I don't see any reason to stop now, especially considering the results from my most recent scan and associated lab work. As my brother Richard has said: "If the oncologist is happy then I'm happy." Well, as of Friday, December 6th, I am very happy.

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

SCHOOLS



Ashley Nero

Send school notes to vienna@connectionnewspapers.com by Friday.

Penn State Altoona swimming freshman Ashley Nero of Oakton was selected as the Women's Swimmer of the Week. Against Bethany, Nero helped the team nab a trio of first places. In the 200 Yard Medley Relay, she joined her teammates to post a time of 2:06.12 for first. Individually, Nero won the 50 Yard Freestyle (26.07) and the 100 Yard Breaststroke (1:13.69). At the Bradford Relays, Nero was a part of the squad that won the Mixed 200 Yard Freestyle Relay with a time of 1:40.41.

Aline Dolinh, 15, is a sophomore at Oakton High School in Vienna and has been appointed as the National Student Poet by the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. Dolinh will participate in readings and workshops at libraries, museums and schools in Virginia as well as create community service projects to expand their reach while increasing engagement in the literary arts.

Kate E. DeWeese, daughter of Randi and Steve DeWeese of Vienna, graduate of Thomas Jefferson High School, and first-year student in the Bachelor of Arts Program, has been inducted into Alpha Lambda Delta honor society at Bucknell University.

On May 11, **Michael D'Onofrio** and **Jill Feroldi** of Oakton and **Charles Schoenthaler** of Vienna graduated from the College of Charleston.

Patrick Murphy of Vienna was placed on the president's list in recognition of academic excellence during the spring 2013 semester at New River Community College.

Vincent Anthony Williams Reese, a graduate of George C. Marshall high school, recently completed a coaching internship with coach Michael Clark of Bridgewater. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in business from Bridgewater College in 2010 and was the quarterback on the Bridgewater Eagles football team. He is working with the US Dept. of Interior at Wolftrap Farm Parks this summer and will be attending graduate school in the fall.

U.S. Navy Ensign **Christopher Michael Ceconi**, son of Bill and Joyce Ceconi of Vienna, graduated from the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. on May 24 and was commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Navy. Ensign Ceconi completed his Bachelor of Science Degree with a major in political science. Following graduation, Ceconi has been assigned to Naval Air Station Pensacola, in Pensacola, Fla. where he will continue training in naval aviation.

Vanessa Parks of James Madison High School is one of 19 high school students from across the region who have accepted honors scholarships awarded by Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA). Scholarship winners are enrolled in NOVA's Honors Program, and the scholarship covers the cost of the student earning one degree at the college.

Students must maintain a GPA of at least 3.2, attend classes full-time, become a leader in a student organization and represent the college's Honors Program as an ambassador to their high schools.

McLean High Student Dances with Encore

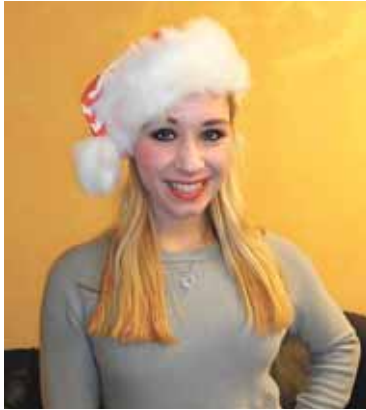
BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

When a precocious young girl changes places with a playful elf at the North Pole, things are bound to go awry and only Santa can save the day. That's the premise of Encore Theatrical Arts Project's new holiday show, "Switching Christmas," and one of the performers is McLean High senior Emma Konnick.

She plays an elf named Cheeky and is delighted with her role. "Cheeky cares about what's happening, but waits for the other elves to get involved in things before she joins in," said Konnick. "She's girly and cutesy, and I see her in me so it's easier to take on this role and add elf characteristics to it."

Konnick especially likes the finale, "Snow," because it's a 12-minute number. "We did it my first year with Encore, when I only got to do one costume change within it," she said. "But now I get to do five costume changes. There's a ballet section and it snows, and we're dressed as snowflakes and gift boxes."

She's been with Encore four years and calls the experience a "turning point" in her career. "It's opened up so many doors for me," she said. "I travel an hour to get to the studio in Chantilly, but it's so worth it." As for the show, she said the audience will enjoy "how everything ties in and how well the plot



McLean High's Emma Konnick plays an elf in "Switching Christmas."

BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

and all the dances mesh together." "It's a heartwarming story and a love story, too," said Director and Choreographer Raynor van der Merwe. "It's also about wanting to be other places, but learning that what we need is right under our noses at home."

Show times are Friday, Dec. 13 and 20, at 8 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 14 and 21, at noon, 4 p.m. and 8 p.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 15 and 22, at noon and 4 p.m., at NOVA's Richard J. Ernst Community Cultural Center, 8333 Little River Turnpike in Annandale. Ticket information is at www.encore-tap.org. "Switching Christmas" offers the magic of

the season in an original dance musical. The cast of nearly 50 includes students from Centreville and Chantilly schools, plus professional actors Dan and Tina Delafield. "People looking for something different than the traditional 'Nutcracker,' 'Messiah' or 'Christmas Carol' will really enjoy this show," said van der Merwe. "The dancers have been rehearsing since July and spend 20-25 hours a week in the studio." "We have lots of newcomers, but also a great group of seasoned performers setting a good example for the younger ones," she continued. "There are so many exciting dance numbers that'll keep young kids entertained, plus a great story that everyone will enjoy. We've got old favorites, plus new numbers, so there's something for everyone. And, visually, it'll be spectacular – it truly is a family musical."



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- 10:00 p.m. – Holy Eucharist
- Christmas music at 9:30 p.m.

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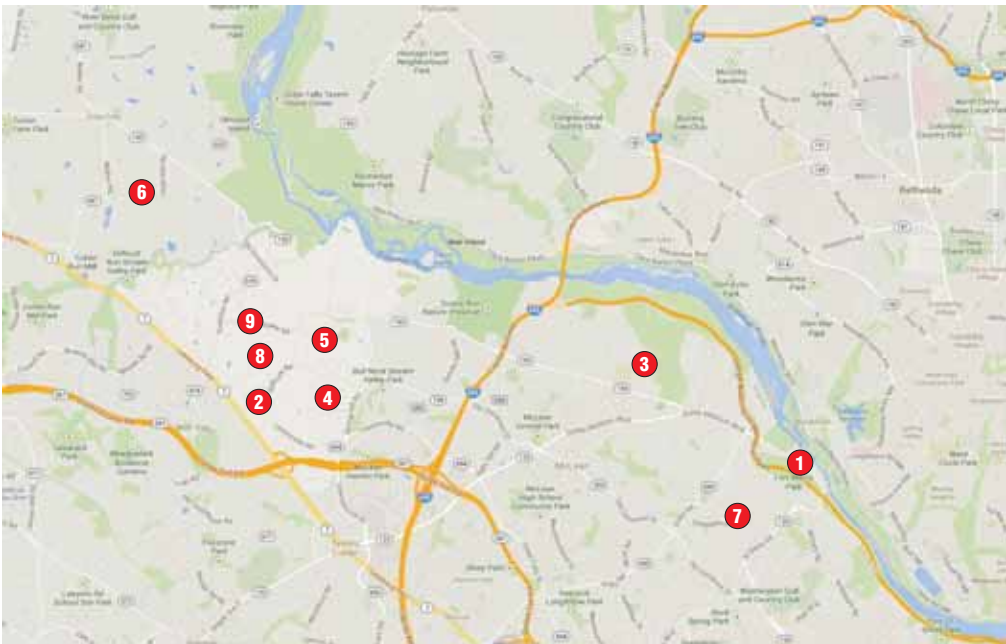
PHOTOS BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

October, 2013 Top Sales in Great Falls and McLean

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2 8900 Gallant Green Drive, McLean — \$5,000,000



3 829 Turkey Run Road, McLean — \$4,000,000

Address	BR	FB	HB	...	Postal	City	...	Sold Price	....	Type	.....	Lot AC	PostalCode	.....	Subdivision	.....	Date Sold
1 634 CHAIN BRIDGE RD	10	8	1	.....	MCLEAN	.....		\$9,500,000	....	Detached	....	6.52	22101	.....	CHAIN BRIDGE	.....	10/11/13
2 8900 GALLANT GREEN DR	6	6	3	.....	MCLEAN	.....		\$5,000,000	....	Detached	....	4.13	22102	.....	WOODSIDE ESTATES	.....	10/07/13
3 829 TURKEY RUN RD	6	5	2	.....	MCLEAN	.....		\$4,000,000	....	Detached	....	1.10	22101	.....	TURKEY RUN	.....	10/01/13
3 8324 WOODLEA MILL RD	5	7	2	.....	MCLEAN	.....		\$2,775,000	....	Detached	....	0.83	22102	.....	WOODLEA MILL	.....	10/18/13
5 8408 PARHAM CT	5	6	2	.....	MCLEAN	.....		\$2,750,000	....	Detached	....	1.72	22102	.....	PROSPECT HILL	.....	10/30/13
6 9696 MILL RIDGE LN	5	5	2	...	GREAT FALLS	..		\$2,400,000	....	Detached	....	1.72	22066	.....	LANE AT FOUR STAIRS	.....	10/15/13
7 6004 WOODLEY RD	6	5	2	.....	MCLEAN	.....		\$2,355,000	....	Detached	....	0.34	22101	.....	CHESTERBROOK WOODS	....	10/01/13
8 1193 WINDROCK DR	5	5	1	.....	MCLEAN	.....		\$2,190,000	....	Detached	....	1.72	22102	.....	CHEQUERS	.....	10/18/13
9 1127 BELLVIEW RD	5	4	1	MCLEAN		\$2,000,000	Detached	5.02	22102	TUSCANY OF MCLEAN	10/18/13

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9 1127 Bellview Road, McLean — \$2,000,000

Opening Up

Open floorplan plus cathedral ceiling equals McLean ranch stylishly re-invented.

BY JOHN BYRD

Assess a circa-1952 ranch on a shady street in McLean with an eye towards maximizing value.

Among the shortcomings: rooms that are too small and dark; a kitchen that hasn't been remodeled in 25 years. A tiny breakfast room. A rear grade too steep for an addition. A front elevation with no visible front door.

And in the plus column: a neighborhood that's gone decisively upscale; a solidly constructed starter house in a "come-back" style. Just enough undeveloped side lot to add useful square footage. An enviably location at the end of a cul de sac.

Bring to this proposition the team of Sarah Wolf, interior designer, and Josh Britton, architectural draftsman — both at Foster Remodeling Solutions — and what's revealed are the skills sets that are transforming so many non-descript mid-century dwellings into the spacious eclectically-designed residences expected of northern Virginia's close-in neighborhoods.

"We're seeing more homeowners preserving and elaborating post-War suburban styles," said Sarah Wolf. "The ranch and other smaller-scale dwellings are especially fascinating. They've long been classified as the prototype for the modern production house, yet we're now seeing how inventive design ideas can be applied to achieve architecturally-relevant makeover goals."

What has turned into a two-phase design process — that will eventually include a second level master suite — began with a single meeting. Wolf had been summoned by homeowners — who had occupied the house for 20 years — "to brainstorm" options for enlarging the kitchen and family room, and re-defining the bare-bones front elevation.

"The previous owners had relocated the original front door to the side sometime in the 1990s," Wolf said. "So one of the early questions was whether it made sense to revise the front elevation in conjunction with a proposed kitchen enlargement."

As the meeting progressed, several key points emerged.

Yes, the owners wanted a substantial enlargement to the kitchen and family room, but the existing interior was also too narrow and too dark. Moreover, since the home's leafy half-acre lot backs into a grove of mature trees bordered by a lovely creek, shouldn't the interior makeover be designed to profile the surrounding landscape?

"SUDDENLY, WE ALL SAW the aesthetic opportunity," Wolf said. "There would be larger windows on all sides. But also a new front-facing family room — with an 11-foot cathedral ceiling dominated by an extensive window wall."

The window wall would, in turn,

SEE RANCH, PAGE 18



PHOTOS BY DIMITRI CANAS

While the new floorplan is functionally a "great room," variances in ceiling height and room width define "use" zones that also gain a degree of privacy.



The 17.5-foot by 13-foot window wall that dominates the new side-facing gable is one component in a front elevation which now features a well-defined entranceway comprised of glass-facing French doors and sidelights.



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McLean Ranch Re-invented

FROM PAGE 17
help to create a more symmetrical front elevation — one defined by a processional entranceway with double french glass doors and sidelights.

The first challenge, however, was contending with the peculiarities of the lot itself.

"The entire plan depended on adding about 350 square feet on the south side of the house while staying within [Fairfax] County setback requirements," said project draftsman Josh Britton. "Since the set-back limit runs diagonally on that side of the house, I designed a two-component footprint which steps back from the front elevation."

Necessity being the mother of invention, the solution makes adroit use of tight tolerances. Space formerly allocated to the old kitchen/family room combination is absorbed into a gourmet kitchen configuration which gains 130 square feet to the west for a total of more than 450 square foot. The new family room — tapering down to 220 square feet — supplants a former front deck.

Taken as a whole, the floor plan



A south-facing bump-out accommodates a cook-top ventilator flanked by transom windows. The concentrated small space solution enlarges the cook's work triangle and creates an additional source of natural light.

is functionally a "great room." Clever variances in room width, ceiling height and sightlines differentiate clearly-identified "use" spaces while reinforcing their inherent sense of privacy.

"The slightly narrower width confers a degree of intimacy on the family room," Wolf said. "On the



Among chef-required built-ins, pull-out drawers pegged to hold various size dishes.

other hand, the cathedral ceiling and window wall heighten the drama — enticing the eye to move up and out." Wolfe's interior design scheme, likewise, balances detailing within a well-integrated whole. Provincial-stained red oak flooring lends cohesion to the entire suite which now flows into the revised living and dining rooms.

Large windows facing south and west bring the richly wooded backyard close-in, forming a setting for an eat-in kitchen that is both highly functional and eye-catching. The kitchen's centerpiece is a food preparation island and dining counter that seats six. The custom built-in is positioned to support both cooking and clean-up tasks while protecting the cook's work triangle. Drawers designed to the chef's requirements called for easy access to a pull-out mixer stand, a roll-out vertical spice rack, and slots specially fitted for everyday china. The island's "ice stone" surface complements a mosaic backsplash comprised of marble, glass, chrome and shell. Glass pendant lamps and lights contribute further to a palette of lighter tones which are countered by cherry cabinets and more textured elements. In the family room, the 54-inch stainless steel hearth with gas burner embedded in river rock is both a heat source and a decoratively ornamental focal point.

Flanked by open cubbies featuring glass display shelves, cherry wood cabinetry, and a wine rack abutting a refrigerator, the built-ins define a functionally separate family entertainment zone that includes wide-screen plasma TV mounted above the fireplace.

A more congenial spot for holiday entertaining is hard to imagine.

PHOTOS BY DMITRI CANAS

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SPORTS



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Senior Co-Captain Casey Howard performs her floor routine while the Marshall team looks on.

Lady Statesmen Gymnasts Win Third Place in Season Opener

The George C. Marshall Lady Statesmen Gymnastics team kicked off their 2013-14 season with a third place finish in a six-team contest at Washington & Lee High School in Arlington. The Marshall team had their strongest-ever season opener, scoring 128.7 points to finish ahead of JEB Stuart, Wakefield, and Hayfield and behind runner-up McLean and winner W&L. Marshall

junior Morgan Stahl won the Floor Exercise event with a score of 9.45. The Statesmen's total score included contributions from several promising freshmen: Kiran Sullivan, Lindsey Price, and Alessandra Iannetti. Head Coach Charlotte Perpall and the Lady Statesmen look forward to a great season; their next meet is Saturday, Dec. 14 at Fairfax High School.

SPORTS BRIEFS

Five Local Harriers to Compete at XC Nationals

Marshall senior Mackenzie Haight is one of five local harriers who will compete at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships national finals on Dec. 14 in San Diego.

Haight earned the trip to nationals by finishing in the top 10 in the south regional race on Nov. 30 in Charlotte. Haight placed fifth with a time of 14:51.

Nationals will take place at Morley Field in Balboa Park.

Edison's Louis Colson will also compete at nationals after placing fourth at regionals with a time of 14:50.

In the girls' race, West Springfield's Caroline Alcorta and Lake Braddock's Hannah Christen and Katy Kunc will also compete at nationals.



PHOTO BY ED LULL

Marshall senior Mackenzie Haight will compete at Foot Locker nationals on Dec. 14 in San Diego.

p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 11.

Herndon Boys' Basketball Wins Two

The Herndon boys' basketball team opened the season with victories against Woodson (73-65, Dec. 3) and Patriot (79-49, Dec. 6).

The Hornets were scheduled to face Washington-Lee on Tuesday, after The Connection's deadline. Herndon will compete in the Gonzaga holiday tournament Dec. 13-15.

Langley Girls' Basketball Opens with Win

The Langley girls' basketball team opened the 2013-14 season with a 61-24 win over Herndon on Dec. 6.

The Saxons will host rival McLean at 5:45 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 13.

Langley Boys' Basketball Loses Two

The Langley boys' basketball team lost to Stuart (60-56, Dec. 6) and Falls Church (70-61, Dec. 7) during the Stuart Tipoff Tournament. The Saxons will return to action at home against Potomac School at 6:30

Alexandria resident and runway model, Tameka Young

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