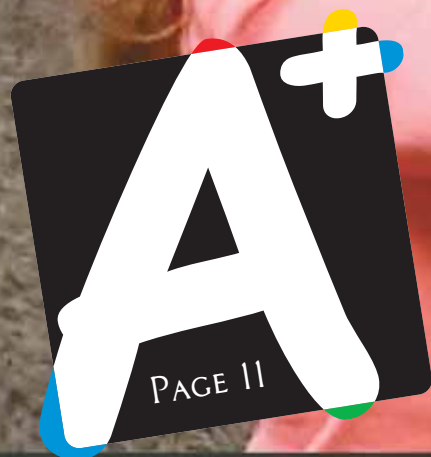


Holiday Sibling Shop Spreads the Spirit of Giving

News, Page 8

Alma Wilson
volunteers with
her daughter at the
FACETS Holiday
Sibling Shop.



A Year in a Fast Lane
News, Page 7

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Del. Eileen Filler-Corn (D-41) participates in Open Education Resource Forum on textbooks at George Mason University on Dec. 2.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

From right - Del. Eileen Filler-Corn pictured with David Anderson, executive director for Higher Education Association of American Publishers, and Nada Dabbagh, professor & director Division of Learning Technologies at George Mason University.

Del. Filler-Corn Co-hosts Open Resources Forum

How to provide students new education resources at no charge.

On Dec. 2, Delegate Eileen Filler-Corn (D-41) co-hosted a forum with David Anderson, executive director for Higher Education, Association of American Publishers and Nada Dabbagh, professor and director of Division of Learning Technologies, George Mason University to discuss new technologies and affordable options for higher education textbooks. This forum

brought together several important stakeholders involved with higher education and the development and usage of textbooks.

"I was honored to lead this forum that continued the vital discussion of how we can reduce costs for our students and families through the use of new technology and resources in textbooks and class materials" said Del. Filler-Corn. "We have continued to

see a rise in the price of textbooks and other auxiliary materials in higher education. We need to use new resources as a way to reduce costs and ensure that students are getting the most out of their higher education."

This forum was the result of a yearlong discussion from Delegate Filler-Corn's 2013 bill, HB 1777, with a goal of creating an Open Education Resource Council tasked with developing and acquiring open education resources that could be provided at no charge to students. This bill was

referred to the Joint Commission on Technology and Science during the 2013 General Assembly session and has drawn wide interest from different parties. The primary focus of the forum held at George Mason University was a discussion of Virginia colleges and universities using open education resources (OER). OER materials are textbooks or other auxiliary resources developed and produced with no copyright restrictions. This makes them available for anyone to access and use at their disposal.



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What More Could FBI Want?

PHOTO BY GEORGE BURKE

Virginia leaders tout merits of Springfield site for FBI HQ relocation.

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION

A high-ranking delegation of Virginia politicians gathered in Springfield Tuesday morning in a renewed effort to convince the Federal Bureau of Investigation to relocate its headquarters to a warehouse site in Springfield.

The move in the high-stakes, highly competitive regional competition comes after site selection guidelines eliminated almost all other Northern Virginia locations.

U.S. Sens. Mark Warner (D) and Tim Kaine (D), U.S. Reps. Jim Moran (D-8), Frank Wolf (R-10) and Gerry Connolly (D-11), Governor-elect Terry McAuliffe (D), State Del. Vivian Watts (D-39), Fairfax County Supervisor Jeff McKay (D-Lee) and others held a news conference on Tuesday, Dec. 17 at Northern Virginia Community College's Medical Campus Tuesday to send a message that the Springfield site is the ideal choice.

IN LATE 2011, the General Services Administration (GSA), which manages federal properties, announced plans to move the FBI's main office out of the run-down, dilapidated J. Edgar Hoover Building on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Since then, several jurisdictions across the Washington region have made it clear they have the ideal location for the bureau's move.

But the Virginia delegation made the argument that the federally-owned warehouse in Springfield makes the best location for the FBI to consolidate as many as 11,000 employees for a number of reasons, including the fact that the GSA already owns the warehouse, which guarantees that federal government ownership of the campus is both clean and easy.

"Virginia checks every box," Warner said, "transit accessible, fiber-wired, synergy with FBI Quantico... Many FBI employees live in Virginia, and it is easy for DC and Maryland residents to commute."

Citing the bi-partisan display of unity in the effort, Kaine said he was "brought into this process by our three members of Congress - Connolly, Moran, and Wolf...It is characteristic of us in Virginia that we all work together."

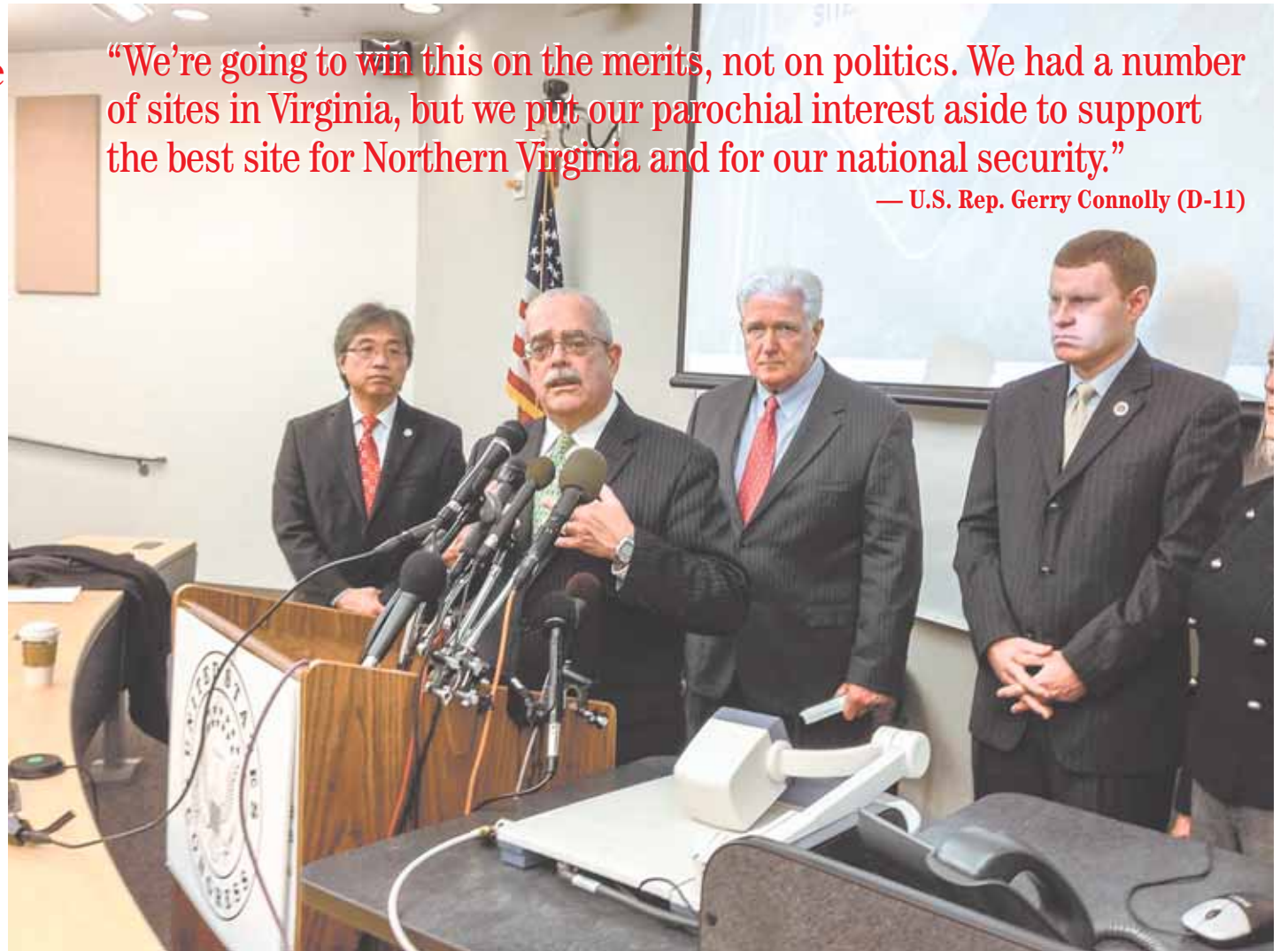
Wolf, who chairs the appropriations sub-committee overseeing the FBI, said the site is ideally located, with easy access to the CIA and Quantico.

Connolly agreed: "The FBI's ability to interact with other federal anti-terrorism offices located in NoVA is critical."

Supervisor McKay, whose district is home

"We're going to win this on the merits, not on politics. We had a number of sites in Virginia, but we put our parochial interest aside to support the best site for Northern Virginia and for our national security."

— U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11)



U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11) joins other high-ranking Virginia politicians in backing the Springfield site for the new FBI headquarters. The GSA is expected to announce the site selection in 2015. From left - Secretary of Commerce and Trade Jim Cheng, who represented Governor Robert McDonnell; U.S. Rep. Jim Moran (D-8) and Fairfax County Supervisor Jeff McKay (D-Lee).



A map of the warehouse site in Springfield shows the location's prime proximity to major transportation. The site is adjacent to the Franconia/Springfield Metro Station, VRE, AMTRAK, bus service, and every highway except Route 66.

He pointed out that airport access will soon be served by two Metro stations once Rail to Dulles is complete.

Fairfax County would also benefit by high-paying jobs that would come to the area, and redevelopment of the site would spur construction of other office projects nearby and expand commercial tax base.

"You know the site makes perfect sense when the entire Northern Virginia Congressional Delegation, the Governor, the Governor-Elect, and State elected and appointed officials - both Democrats and Republicans - all agree on something," McKay added.

ACCORDING TO OFFICIALS, the decision by the GSA will be made in 2015. While other regional sites have been eliminated for various reasons, Maryland is still in the running with its site in Prince Georges County.

But Connolly predicts the Springfield site will be the chosen one.

"We're going to win this on the merits, not on politics. We had a number of sites in Virginia, but we put our parochial interest aside to support the best site for Northern Virginia and for our national security."

to the warehouse site, said county officials will do "everything in our power to make sure zoning and other factors are in place."

McKay said the benefits to the federal government of relocating to Springfield "would be substantial."

In January 2012, Fairfax County joined Prince George's County and the District in placing its marker on the table in the high-stakes competition soon after the Senate passed a resolution authorizing the GSA and FBI to seek new headquarters in December

2011.

"The FBI needs 2 million square feet of office space, located within two miles of a Metro station and within 2.5 miles of the Beltway according to the GAO. Redeveloping existing sites in DC would be extremely expensive, especially given the post-911 security features that are now required...It is adjacent to the Franconia/Springfield Metro Station, VRE, AMTRAK, bus service, and every highway except Route 66," McKay said at the time.

DiCenzo Has Bright Vision for Fairfax

Getting to know the high school's new theater director.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

As theater teacher and director at Fairfax High, Erich DiCenzo is exactly where he wants to be. "I have a bachelor of fine arts in musical theater and dance and was a professional actor for eight years, so this is a second career," he said. "I knew I wanted to perform forever, but not make it my living."

DiCenzo acted with some of the most highly regarded theater companies throughout the U.S. And for all of 2010, he was a singer-dancer on a world cruise exploring 68 countries.

But he wanted to do more with his life and talents.

"I was always drawn to teaching and wanted to blend both

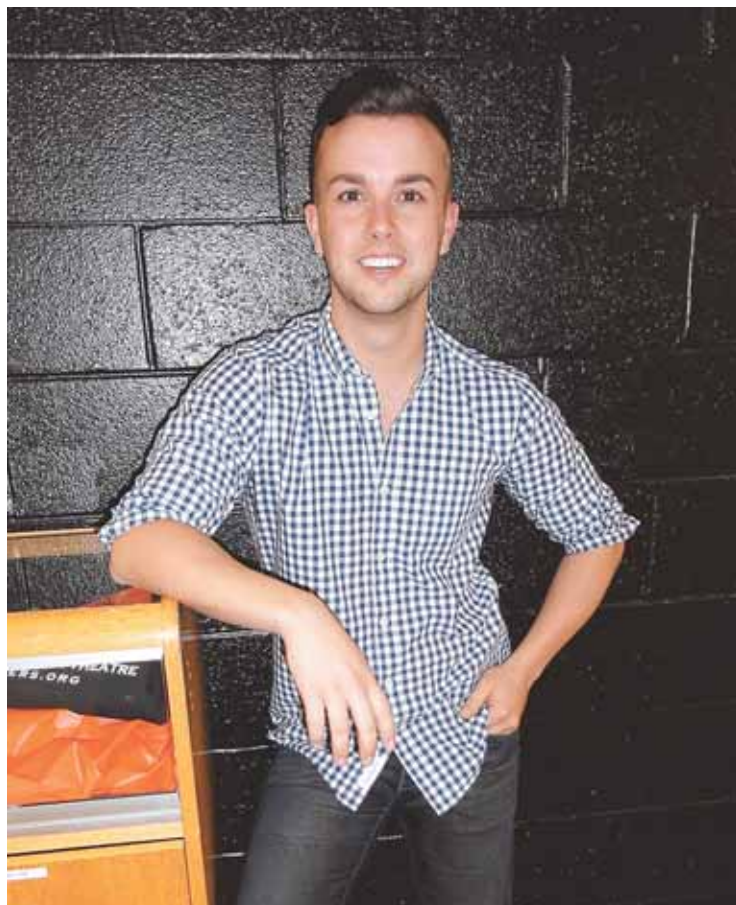


PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Erich DiCenzo is thrilled to be Fairfax High's theater director.

worlds," he explained. "I hoped to take my experience and share it with youth."

So in September, DiCenzo, 29, began doing just that at Fairfax, and his style and enthusiasm proved a hit with the students and reinvigorated the theater program there.

"I talk to the kids as one actor to another," he said. "We discuss the characters they're playing, in depth, so they can discover the motivations that lie within. It's all about the process; and the students are learning that, if they take the time with it, then their product will be 100 times better."

DICENZO'S FIRST PRODUCTION at Fairfax was last month's "Almost, Maine," and the audience loved it. But the preparation for the show's success began long before the actors stepped onto the stage.

"Because they know I have such high standards and expectations of them, they were off-book [acting without their scripts], the second rehearsal," he said. "Then we were able to have fun, play and truly dissect the show."

And DiCenzo was pleased with how his students responded, "creating real moments onstage," and wants to continue "bringing that relevance and freshness to them."

Born and raised in Pittsburgh, he started acting in middle school and immediately connected with theater's social aspect.

"I liked theater people," he said. "They're a good group of people having fun just being together." And, said DiCenzo, it's also valuable for teenagers to have that kind of support system in their lives.

"The skills high-school kids learn today, and the support they get from the other kids in theater, is more beneficial than they realize," he said.

"My students feel that this is their family and their oasis. It's a safe place where they won't get picked on and judged, as well as a place where they can take risks and gain strength through their vulnerabilities."

This year, said DiCenzo, as a first-year teacher and an instructor new to Fairfax, his philosophy is to address everything under a professional umbrella. "So I'm running this as a professional theater

company would run," he said. "I'm teaching students the social aspect of theater and how to behave as a professional actor and communicate – skills they can use in real life."

"The fun is in the work and in trying new things," he continued. "Whether my students want to be Broadway stars or go into business, they'll always have to be able

to express themselves socially."

DiCenzo's ultimate goal, he said, is "to build this program to be the best it can be. We have the Academy,

and Mike Replogle, who directs the Professional Musical Theatre and Actor's Studio, is fantastic. And what's exciting is that he and I both have practical experience auditioning and not getting the part and auditioning again and again until we did."

This experience and credibility, said DiCenzo, "transfers when you teach it. So I want to work closely with Mike to blend our experience together to make Fairfax the place to be for students in the performing arts."

He also hopes to do likewise with Academy dance teacher Andrea Heining. "She has the practical experience, too," said DiCenzo. "We both went to Point Park University in Pittsburgh – a conservatory for performing arts. She was a dance major and I was a musical-theater major. We didn't know each other then; but here, we really clicked."

So at Fairfax High, he said, "I've been welcomed by like-minded people and visions that match my own. And I really believe that, together, we can take this program to unforeseen places."

BESIDES DIRECTING the school plays, DiCenzo also teaches film study, theater and technical theater. And he couldn't be happier.

"I'd love to end my career here, never having left," he said. "I feel like I hit the lottery at Fairfax – it's beyond what I ever imagined. When I thought of my ideal situation, this was it."

And with the talent of the kids, amazing facilities, camaraderie of the creative team here and supportive administration that allows us to take risks on sometimes edgy material, the possibilities are endless."

"Together, we can take this program to unforeseen places."

— Erich DiCenzo, Fairfax High theater director

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NEWS

Trust in School System Tested

Results of the third annual survey released.

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) Superintendent Karen K. Garza has released the results of the third annual trust and confidence survey of FCPS parents and taxpayers that measured opinions about a number of issues related to the school district. The assessment surveyed more than 10,700 parents and non-parent taxpayers to determine their overall level of trust and confidence in the school system. Survey participants were asked whether they agreed with a number of statements about FCPS. A total of 84 percent of parent respondents strongly agreed or agreed that FCPS is a trustworthy public institution, and 65 percent of non-parents strongly agreed or agreed with that statement. These numbers are up slightly from 2012 respondents. Approximately 25 percent of non-parents say they don't have enough information to make that assessment, a two-point decrease from last year, and a positive indicator. Every question had an increase in the agree-strongly agree responses, and some had significant increases of four or more points. Each question also saw an improvement in the "don't have enough information to make an assessment" response, and some had significant decreases of five or more points, an indicator of improvement, showing that fewer people feel they don't have enough information to respond.

A significant increase in the agree-strongly agree responses was "School system leaders make

decisions that reflect the community's values," an increase from 63 percent to 70 percent among parents, and from 41 to 47 percent among non-parents. Positive responses for the following items increased over the 2012 survey: 90 percent of parents and 65 percent of non-parents agree that FCPS respects the cultural diversity of students and families, and 83 percent of parents and 56 percent of non-parents agree that FCPS teachers are effective in preparing students for the future. Eighty-three percent of parent respondents also confirmed that FCPS is providing students with the right education for the 21st century, along with 56 percent of non-parent respondents. Additionally, 89 percent of parents and 57 percent of non-parents indicated they receive the information they want or need about the school system (an increase of two and three percentage points, respectively), and 79 percent of parents and 36 percent of non-parents feel they are informed in a timely manner of major decisions made by FCPS (an increase of 2 percentage points by each group).

Respondents indicated an increase in awareness in several areas. In the item stating, "The district has made progress in students' gaining essential life skills," one of the Fairfax County School Board's student achievement goals, an 8 percentage point drop was posted by parents in the "don't have enough information to make an assessment" response, along with a 7 percentage point drop for non-parents. For the same essential life skills item, an increase of 12 percentage points was seen among parents who agreed with the statement, and an increase of 6 percentage points was seen among non-parents who agreed. Consistent with last year's findings, parents trust these top three sources for factual information about FCPS: FCPS official communications, 78 percent; the local school, 73 percent; and FCPS employees, 16 percent. FCPS official communications include the school district's website, news releases, and three FCPS newsletters.

For complete results, visit www.fcps.edu. To sign up for the FCPS community newsletter, visit www.fcps.edu/kit/.

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

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 18

YA Book Discussion Group. 7-9 p.m. City of Fairfax Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. We will discuss "Island of the Aunts," by Eva Ibbotson. Registration required. Age 10-14. 703-293-6227.

THURSDAY/DEC. 19

Creative Reading. 4:30-5:30 p.m. Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Read a story aloud as a group, write your own addition to the story and draw an illustration. Registration required. Age 6-10. 703-249-1520.

OPINION

Preserve 3-2-1 for Housing

Housing for all income levels near transit supports vibrant communities and job growth, reduces traffic.

BY MICHELLE KROCKER
AND JIM EDMONDSON

In the latest edition of The Herrity Report, Springfield Supervisor Pat Herrity proposed “redirecting developers’ \$3 per square foot contribution for buying rent-controlled housing units into a trust fund to pay for public school renovation and construction.”

The report proceeds to make several unsubstantiated claims regarding the number of people living in subsidized housing and the growth in both the number of subsidized units and number of households in Fairfax County. However as in the past, The Herrity Report does not provide the full picture of the housing policy under discussion, and misrepresents the facts.

The Board of Supervisors adopted its housing policy in 2010 as a part of the larger plan

for the redevelopment of Tysons. It is now under consideration, at the request of the board, for application in other designated high density, transit and business centers in the rest of the county. Called the ‘3-2-1’ policy, the proposal by county staff would apply a contribution from commercial development to support the construction of workforce housing in the transit or business area, as it does in the Tysons plan. The contribution would be applied on a sliding scale based on a proposed development’s proximity to a transit station. This proposal will go before the Planning Commission and then the Board of Supervisors in the first quarter of 2014.

Why is this policy important?

❖ To accommodate projected job growth and remain competitive within the region, it is important to ensure housing opportunities for the workforce of the future at all income levels;

❖ Developing housing at transit stations and adjacent to employment centers encourages use of mass transit, walking and biking which can lead to fewer cars, and less congestion; it also enhances Metro revenue and reduces the pressure on local government to provide subsidies for the system;

❖ Linking commercial development (jobs) and housing via a linkage program is an acknowledged “best practice” in hundreds of communities across the country to ensure an

adequate supply of housing to support job growth.

❖ It recognizes the changing preferences of workers/taxpayers/voters, particularly young people, to live near where they work.

The proposed policy anticipates that the contributions will be made to a housing trust fund used by the county to leverage private sector financing to develop the needed housing.

The housing that is constructed will not be owned or purchased by the county. In fact, very little of the affordable housing in the county is owned by the government.

Securing decent housing that is affordable remains a challenge for Fairfax County households earning less than \$60,000.

Meeting the growing needs of our school system is also an important issue. Both education and safe, decent housing are fundamental to the well-being of our community, and residents want leadership that seeks to find workable solutions. Failing to recognize the importance of both and pitting one issue against the other are not the answers, and the citizens of Fairfax County deserve better from elected officials.

Michelle Krockner is executive director, Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance. Jim Edmondson is president of AHOME, which promotes affordable housing opportunities for families at all income levels.

GUEST
EDITORIAL

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Parents Advocate for Class Size Caps

To the Editor:

On Saturday, Dec. 7, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) Superintendent’s (Dr. Karen Garza) conducted a “Listening Tour” meeting at Cooper Middle School in McLean.

Many parents who spoke at the meeting were concerned about large class sizes in their children’s schools. This is not a problem in most FCPS schools - the average elementary school class in FCPS has only 21-22 students, and plenty of FCPS elementary schools average 20 or fewer students per class.

However, large class sizes have become the norm in Vienna, Oakton, McLean and Great Falls schools. Teachers unlucky enough to be assigned to the 30+ classes are often pushed to the limit in terms of what they can do to control classroom behavior and alleviate student stress. At Wolftrap Elementary, teachers have even created a “coping couch” for stressed kids to help them escape from the crowded, noisy and chaotic atmosphere that is so often inevitable with such excessively large classes.

The school system is looking at county-wide increases in average class sizes. Without some type of class size cap, this would create a situation where most of the county’s students had reasonable class sizes (e.g., 16 to 26 students), but even more students in the Vienna, Oakton, McLean and Great Falls would have more than 30 students in their rooms - which are no larger than the rooms being used to hold 17 or 22 students elsewhere in FCPS.



Karen Garza discusses class size at the Dec. 7 listening tour in McLean.

After seeing their children crammed into oversized classes for years, parents formed Class Size Counts last year. The group is working with State Delegate Barbara Comstock to address the class size issue at the state level, Supervisor Foust, several School Board members and Superintendent Garza at the county level. The Class Size Counts online petition, with over 1,000 signatures, asks that the Fairfax County school system not increase average class sizes without simultaneously implementing class size caps:

http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/stop-oversize-classes-in-fairfax-countyschool/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=system&utm_campaign=Send%2Bto%2BFriend

At Cooper Middle School, Dr. Garza reassured parents and teachers in the room that she is working to fix this problem, by drafting an FCPS regulation that would impose class size caps.

Class Size Counts applauds Dr. Garza for taking a stand on implementing caps so that all children in FCPS can receive a decent and fair education.

Interestingly, the School Board member whose district includes many schools with the largest class sizes - Jane Strauss - also told parents at a Longfellow PTA meeting that she opposed a class size cap, and preferred to continue using the FCPS “staffing reserve.” Several years ago, parents submitted a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for emails and other documents regarding the staffing reserve. The documents painted a picture of a slush fund with no apparent criteria or controls.

Kim Farrell

Mother of two FCPS students
Vienna

Write

Letters to the Editor
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NEWS

Just south of the Fairfax County Parkway overpass, workers put decking on a reversible express lanes ramp in fall 2013.



PHOTO BY
JOE ROMEO

A Year in a Fast Lane

2013 was a big year for transportation projects in Northern Virginia.

Construction dominated the scenery on I-95/395 between Garrisonville Road (Route 610) in Stafford County and Turkeycock Park near Edsall Road in the north as the 95 Express Lanes project crews advanced work in the 29-mile construction corridor keeping the project on-track to open to traffic in early 2015.

The 2013 work focused on clearing the roadbed in the median for the new Express Lanes and building new ramps and foundations for nine new bridges including four flyover ramps connecting the Express Lanes to the general purpose lanes and other I-95/395 overhead crossing roads and two new bridge structures on the I-95 mainline over streams and creeks.

One of the major bridge construction efforts was demolishing and re-building the Telegraph Road bridge carrying traffic serving the Quantico, USMC facilities on both sides of I-95 requiring a 9-month long detour. Once the old bridge was demolished, the median ground between 95 north and south was excavated to provide room for new 95 Express Lanes and the new Telegraph Road bridge was built over the summer and will reopen this winter. Currently, new bridges crossing Aquia Creek, Chopawamsic Creek, Russell Road, Joplin Road, Route 1 and Furnace Road are under construction and will be completed this year.

Keeping Motorists Informed

Throughout the year, Virginia Megaprojects continued its public outreach program that keeps motorists informed of construction and providing commuters with alternate travel options. One popular program has been the Woodbridge Tysons Express buses, the Saturday Metrodirect Bus between Potomac Mills Mall and the Springfield-Franconia Metro Station. Also, the new dynamic travel-time sign comparing HOV travel times to the general purpose lanes and placement of additional message boards and signage are other methods the VDOT Virginia Megaprojects team employs to keep motorists aware of highway conditions.

Construction impacts are also announced on the Megaprojects e-news, an electronic newspaper that is distributed on a bi-weekly and monthly basis. To sign up for the e-news, email requests to info@vamegaprojects.com.

Building the new flyover ramps required the placement of steel beams over the I-95 lanes and several midnight to early morning detours were implemented allowing crews access to place steel beams across the 95 lanes. The flyover ramp south of Dumfries was done first, followed by the flyover near Alban Road in Springfield, and the flyover at Garrisonville Road in Stafford County. Beam placement for the final flyover ramp at Turkeycock Park near Edsall Road will be completed in January 2014. At the Fort Belvoir North Area in Springfield, beams will be placed over I-95 South and Backlick Road in early January and a detour will be in place for this overnight activity. Although this is not part of the 95 Express Lanes project, it is in the same corridor and will impact motorists traveling at night.

In 2014, crews will be finishing the flyover ramp connections, placing pavement, installing sound walls and erecting signs and toll gantry's throughout the corridor.



From the air, decking is nearly complete on the reversible 95 Express Lanes ramp in the Newington area.

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FACETS Hosts Holiday Siblings Shop

FACETS hosts a traditional Holiday Sibling Shop.

BY JANELLE GERMANOS
THE CONNECTION

FACETS, a non-profit in Fairfax that helps those affected by poverty, hosted a Holiday Sibling Shop on Dec. 16 at the Ragan Oaks Community Center that allowed children living in an affordable housing community to shop for donated gifts to give to their siblings during the holiday season.

According to James Wilson, a community advocate for FACETS, the Holiday Sibling Shops not only give children the chance to shop for gifts, but also reduce stress the families may face.

"More importantly, knowing that their kids are going to be able to get gifts for their siblings and it is not an additional expense the parents have to budget in with the other things they have to worry about such as rent, work, and other expenses," Wilson said.

Gifts at the Holiday Sibling Shops are donated and the event takes place at FACETS Education and Community Development locations in the affordable housing communities.

"We really enjoy giving gifts to kids that would probably not have anything," said Liz Griffith, the development coordinator for FACETS. "It makes them feel more normal and they don't feel so left out."

The Holiday Sibling Shop, which also took place at three other affordable housing communities throughout the week, included volunteers from Bank of America, Deloitte, and INOVA Health.

Edgar Guerra, who works at Bank of America in Fairfax and volunteered at the Holiday Sibling Shop, lived in an affordable housing community as a child and re-



Neyda Lugunes-Loza, 13, helped Jason, 6, pick out a gift for his brother at the FACETS Holiday Sibling Shop.

members participating in FACETS activities and services at the community center in his neighborhood.

Guerra grew up in Robinson Square, which has a recreation center serviced by FACETS. He later became a volunteer for FACETS, working as a peer lab assistant and a homework help volunteer. He also spoke at the FACETS Benefit Breakfast in 2009.

"When I saw the FACETS posting, I knew I had to go. FACETS has been a wonderful organization, in my experiences volunteering," Guerra said.

Guerra said that the community centers serviced by FACETS provide important resources and positive reinforcement for children living in the affordable housing communities.

"I was happy that there was a positive place to go to," Guerra said. "It was great to have those

resources available."

Volunteers at the event helped children pick out gifts for their siblings, and also helped wrapped the gifts.

Alma Wilson, who works for Bank of America in Alexandria, brought her daughter Kira to the Holiday Sibling Shops because she thought it would be a good experience. "I like the concept that families are able to get presents. It is nice to help families who cannot afford them," Wilson said.

Guerra said that he volunteers because he wants to give back to the community and to the cycle of kindness that he experienced.

"Even if it is just that one thing that a volunteer will say to a child that is positive to them, it can carry on forever," Guerra said. "I remember their faces a little bit, but that positive vibe is a wonderful thing to have."



Edgar Guerra, who works at Bank of America in Fairfax, wraps presents at the FACETS Holiday Sibling Shop.



Miguel Reynoso wraps presents that children picked out for their siblings at the FACETS Holiday Sibling Shop on Dec. 16.

www.ConnectionNewspapers.com



Adrian, 11, picked out Legos at the FACETS Holiday Sibling Shop for his brother.

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A 'Homeless' Church Presents Living Nativity

Church of the Apostles Anglican (formerly on Pickett Road in Fairfax) lost their church property more than two years ago in a dispute with the Episcopal diocese. While temporarily "homeless" the church (known for decades of theatrical and dance performances) has decided to bring the show on the road. Their unique take on a living nativity will be held in a non-religious atmosphere at the Sherwood Community Center in Fairfax. Admission is free.

Friday, Dec. 20, 7 – 8 p.m. at Sherwood Community Center (next to Van Dyke Park), 3740 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax.

Rev. Joe Acanfora has said that even though the economy is recovering, there are still many people out there distressed or just coming out of a tailspin or still feeling "homeless" and that the circumstances this church went through have actually worked to bring the church into the general community rather than stay within physical walls.

Church of the Apostles has an equally different take on the Living Nativity, as the seemingly impromptu dialog shows the harsh realities people faced during the time of the census thousands of years ago.



Rev. Joe Acanfora plays a rabbi.

Christmas In Bethlehem

If seeing is believing, come be among the census crowd in Bethlehem for the first Christmas night in an interactive experience.

*Friday, Dec. 20, 7 – 8 p.m. at Sherwood Community Center (next to Van Dyke Park), 3740 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax.

Presented by Church of the Apostles. Admission is free.

A church in Oakton (Whole Word Fellowship) hosts the COAA congregation twice on Sundays in the interim. Church members hail from all parts of Fairfax County including Reston, Herndon, Springfield, Annandale, Clifton, and Centreville/Chantilly. For more information visit www.christmasinbethlehem.org

ONC Volunteers Make the Holidays Bright

Every December, the nonprofit Our Neighbor's Child's (ONC) provides new toys and clothing for families in need in Chantilly, Clifton, Fair Oaks and Fair Lakes. This year, it's bringing holiday joy to more than 700 families – including more than 2,000 children.

Last Thursday, Dec. 12, volunteers helped package the thousands of gifts donated for them by the local community. Fairfax High grads Leslie Dominy and Mickey McDermott made sure the right gifts went into the right bags and checked that they're labeled with each family's ID number, plus how many bags they're receiving. ONC's founder and executive director, Kelly Lavin, also graduated from Fairfax High.



Fairfax High grads Leslie Dominy and Mickey McDermott take a break from working to pose with a penguin.

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HOLIDAY CALENDAR

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 18

Travelers' Christmas Eve. 7:30 p.m. Messiah United Methodist Church, 6215 Rolling Road, Springfield. A Christmas Eve service for those persons, especially first responders, doctors and nurses who may have to work on Dec. 24. www.messiahumc.org

FRIDAY/DEC. 20 - SATURDAY/DEC. 21

"Oh Holy Night," a Christmas Concert. 7:30 p.m. Workhouse Arts Center, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. Get in the holiday spirit with some melodious tunes. Tickets \$15 <http://www.workhousearts.org/events/performing-arts/christmas-concert-holy-night>

SATURDAY/DEC. 21

An Irish Christmas – An Nollaig. 8 p.m. GMU Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Irish-American fiddler Eileen Ivers brings the joy of the holiday season to Fairfax with her celebration for the whole family, a heartwarming concert filled with tales of Irish Christmas traditions and favorite Celtic holiday tunes. Tickets: \$25-\$50.

Living Nativity. 5:30-7:30 p.m. Safeway Parking Lot, Burke Town



Eileen Ivers brings the joy of the holiday season to Fairfax with her celebration for the whole family, a heartwarming concert filled with tales of Irish Christmas traditions and favorite Celtic holiday tunes on Dec. 21 at GMU's Center for the Arts.

Plaza, at the corner of Old Keene Mill and Lee Chapel/Burke Center Parkway. Calvary Christian Church is hosting its annual 'Living Nativity'. In addition to people, sheep, donkeys and even a camel will be there. Hot cocoa, cider and cookies will be provided.

SUNDAY/DEC. 22

Christmas Cantata. 11 a.m. Cranford United Methodist Church, 9912 Old Colchester Road, Lorton. Join the 25 member strong Cranford Chancel Choir, led by music director Gayle Lennon, as they sing to the glories of the coming Emmanuel with song.

TUESDAY/DEC. 24

Christmas Caroling. 4:30 p.m. Cranford United Methodist Church, 9912 Old Colchester Road, Lorton. Door-to-door caroling.

Candlelight Christmas Eve Service. 7:30 p.m. Cranford United Methodist Church, 9912 Old

Colchester Road, Lorton. An evening of music, scripture and quiet reflection of the birth of Jesus.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 25

J Fest. 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. wish Community Center of Northern Virginia, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. The day includes entertainment, food and fun for all ages.

At 3 p.m., the JCCNV will screen the documentary "Hava Nagila (The Movie)" — a romp through the history, mystery and meaning of the great Jewish standard. Israeli dancing with Markid Mark follows the film. J Fest fee per family (up to 6 people): \$20/ \$15 JCCNV member (includes admission and movie screening). Film only fee: \$9/ \$6 JCCNV member, senior, student, child. Call (703) 323-0880 for details and to register, or visit www.jccnv.org.

TUESDAY/DEC. 31

The Ultimate 80s New Years Eve. 9 p.m. Empire, 6355 Rolling Road, Springfield. \$20.

The Ultimate New Year's Eve Experience. 7 p.m. - 1 a.m. Hyatt Fair Lakes Hotel, 12777 Fair Lakes Circle, Fairfax. Live entertainment, music, food, and more. Tickets: \$159 per person.

Cool Cow Comedy Presents: The New Years Eve Special. 7 p.m. & 9 p.m. Workhouse Arts Center, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. Admission: \$35. With powerful stand up comedy and hilarious sketch comedy, Rahmien Mostafavi (DC Improv, Kennedy Center), Jon Mumma (DC Improv, Sirius XM), and Danny Rouhier (106.7 The Fan, DC Improv) will take you toward midnight with side splitting comedy. For tickets, visit: <http://www.workhousearts.org/events/performing-arts/cool-cow-comedy-presents-nye-special-show>.

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CALENDAR

To have community events listed, send to south@connectionnewspapers.com or call 703-778-9416 with questions. The deadline for submissions is the Friday prior to publication; we recommend submitting your event two weeks ahead of time. To see more entertainment events, go to: <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2013/sep/26/fairfax-county-calendar/>.

WEDNESDAY/DEC.18/SUNDAY/JAN.5

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From the Fire. Workhouse Arts, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. Five diverse ceramic artists challenge themselves to create personal work for a joint firing in "From the Fire", an educational exhibit of 30 works and concomitant photographs and text.

SATURDAY/DEC. 21

Ballroom Social Dance. 7:30-10:30 p.m. 601 Ox Road, Lorton. Admission: \$15. <http://www.workhousearts.org/events/performing-arts/ballroom-social-dance-10>

FRIDAY/JAN.3&SATURDAY/JAN.4

Cabaret Series: Welcome to the Speakeasy. 8 p.m. Workhouse Arts, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. A raucous ramble through the Jazz Age as talented performers tackle the tunes inspired by the gin-joint atmosphere.

SUNDAY/JAN. 5

Cabaret Series: Welcome to the Speakeasy. 1 p.m. Workhouse Arts, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. A raucous ramble through the Jazz Age as talented performers tackle the tunes inspired by the gin-joint atmosphere.

ONGOING

First Fridays at the Clifton Art Guild. 6-9 p.m. at Clifton Wine Shop, 7145 C Main St., Clifton. Enjoy a wine tasting and mix and mingle with the Art Guild of Clifton artists. 703-830-1480 or www.artguildofclifton.org/.

Saturday Farmers Market. 8 a.m.-1 p.m., at the parking lot at the intersection of West and Main Streets behind Wells Fargo Bank in Fairfax. Every Saturday there is fresh produce, goods and wares at the market. church@sovgracefairfax.org or www.FairfaxSaturdayMarket.com.

Sunday Farmers Market. 10 a.m.-2 p.m., at the parking lot at the intersection of West and Main Streets behind Wells Fargo Bank in Fairfax. Every Saturday there is fresh produce, goods and wares at the market. church@sovgracefairfax.org or www.FairfaxSundayMarket.com.

Fairfax Mosaic Wednesday Night Freshbikes Rides. 6:30 p.m., at Fairfax Mosaic Freshbikes, 2910 District Ave., Fairfax. Weekly bike rides leave from the Fairfax Mosaic store, the newest addition to the Freshbikes family of stores in the area. www.freshbikescycling.com.

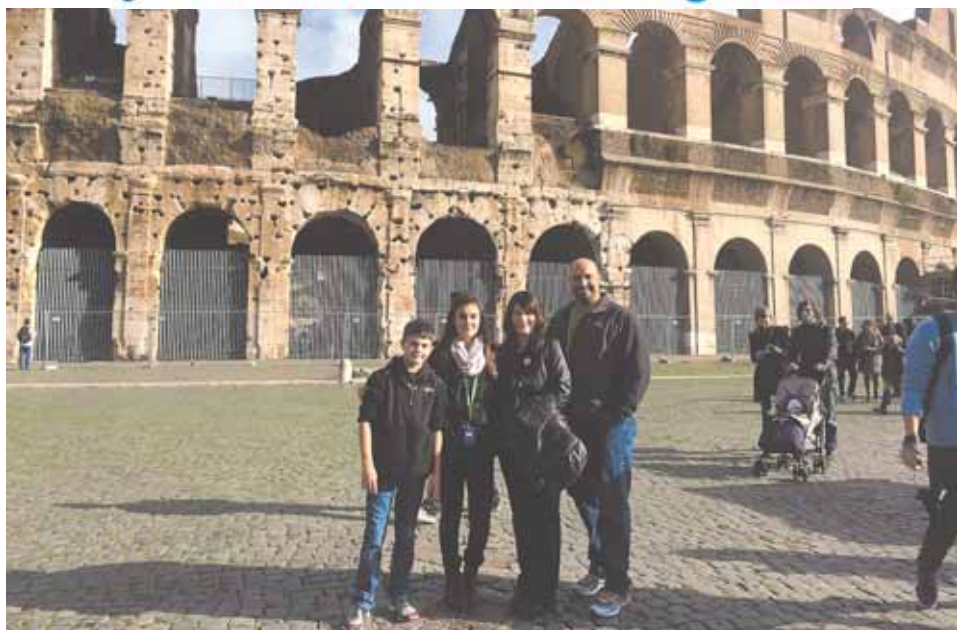


PHOTO COURTESY OF LEN ANNETTA

Len Annetta, Ph.D., of George Mason University traveled to Italy recently with his wife, Jennifer, and his children Samantha and Joey. Annetta kept his children occupied during the long flight with cloud games and by helping them practice Italian.

Home for the Holidays: Surviving a Long Trip

Keeping children entertained on lengthy airplane rides.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Liz Henry is nervous about her upcoming flight to San Francisco. It's not TSA regulations or long lines that are causing her anxiety, however. It is traveling alone with her three children — all of whom are under the age of 6.

"My kids are 5, 3 and 1," said Henry, who lives in Vienna. "I'm taking them to visit my family for Christmas, but they've never flown before. I have a lot of DVDs packed, but I don't know how far those will get me. I don't like pacifying my kids with videos, but I don't think I have a choice."

Going home for the holidays often means boarding an airplane with high-energy children and settling in for a long ride. Parents such as Henry scramble to find ways to fill the time in a way that keeps their child entertained without disturbing other passengers. Local education experts say there are options that don't involve the last resort of videos and electronic games, however.

"Reading is always a good choice, but for many children, it cannot hold their attention for long plane rides," said Len Annetta, Ph.D., a professor in the College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University. "Games like Scrabble challenge players' literacy skills in a fun way. Crossword puzzles are also fun and engaging."

Annetta, who recently returned from a family trip to Italy, has first-hand experi-

ence with surviving lengthy plane rides with children in tow. "I took the whole family, including my 13- and 11-year-old children," he said. "My children are older, but we played a name the cloud game. Of course, we were above the clouds, so it made it a bit more difficult."

When traveling abroad, a long flight is an ideal time to learn more about the culture or language of your final destination. "My children tried a crash course on Italian," said Annetta. "They learned a few words they used during the week we were there. This was a free app on the iPod that we downloaded before we left."

Bethesda-based psychotherapist Katie Cogan, Ph.D., recommends activities that engage a child's imagination, particularly for younger children. "You always have your imagination with you no matter what," she said. "You can say to a child, 'Tell me a story,' or you can take turns telling stories with your child. When you're on the plane, you can help your child imagine what it will look like when we get there."

For young children, Cogan said, "Using what's inside you to create a world that already exists. It is called active imagination. Use your creativity to do anything. If you're with a young child, you can ask 'How many things can you think of that are red?'"

Cogan also advises helping children make up a story, particularly about their final destination. "If it is a small kid, give them the first part of the story or the first word and let them take it from there," she said. "Have paper with you, and you can have your child tell you the story and either write it down or have your child write the story down and color it."

Annetta said, "Journaling your experience is a fun way to practice writing while telling the story of where you are going or where you've been."



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SPORTS

PHOTOS BY ED LULL



West Springfield senior Caroline Alcorta, seen during the VHSL state meet, placed third at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships national meet on Dec. 14 in San Diego.



Lake Braddock senior Katy Kunc, seen during the VHSL state meet, finished 19th at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships national meet on Dec. 14 in San Diego.



Lake Braddock senior Hannah Christen, seen during the VHSL state meet, finished 21st at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships national meet on Dec. 14 in San Diego.

West Springfield's Alcorta Places Third at Foot Locker Nationals

Lake Braddock's Kunc, Christen compete at XC nationals.

BY JON ROETMAN
THE CONNECTION

Caroline Alcorta finished 16th at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships national meet as a junior in 2012, missing by the slimmest of margins the All-America status that accompanies a top-15 finish.

Alcorta was disappointed but not devastated, knowing she'd have one more shot to crack the top 15.

This year, Alcorta won the south regional in Charlotte on Nov. 30, earning a trip back to nationals. The West Springfield senior had her sights set on becoming an All-American, saying a top-15 finish would be "nifty."

This time, she left no doubt.

ALCORTA PLACED THIRD at the Foot Locker national meet on Dec. 14, finishing with a time of 17:31 at Morley Park in San Diego. Last year, Alcorta missed a top-15 finish by less than a second. This year, only two runners were faster and she finished 22 seconds ahead of the 15th-place harrier.

Alcorta said her goal was to finish in the top 15, but her "stretch goal" was to place in the top five.

"I'm happy with the effort I put into it and how it turned out,"

Alcorta said. "I couldn't ask for anything better than a top-five finish."

As a senior, Alcorta got used to self-motivating as she would build large leads en route to victory. During the VHSL state meet at Great Meadow, Alcorta won the Group 6A championship with a meet-record time of 17:13, finishing 39 seconds faster than her nearest competitor. Alcorta won the 6A North regional meet with a time of 16:31, the third-fastest time in Burke Lake Park history, and finished 48 seconds ahead of the second-place harrier. West Springfield coach Chris Pellegrini told Alcorta to focus on running her own race without letting any outside factors change her approach.

"I'm happy with the effort I put into it and how it turned out. I couldn't ask for anything better than a top-five finish."

— West Springfield senior Caroline Alcorta

On Saturday, however, Alcorta had to chase a couple harriers, something she said helped her run a better race.

"My coach and I talked about even if I couldn't win I would race to try and win," Alcorta said. "That

would push me to do the best I could. ... I know I'm supposed to run my own race, but at the same time it's nice to know there are people to help you. ... Looking ahead to see the people you're trying to catch is really big."

Tessa Barrett, a senior from Waverly, Pa., won the event with a time of 17:15.4. Hannah DeBalsi, a sophomore from Westport, Conn., finished second with a time of 17:25.3.

Alcorta started running cross country as a sophomore and continued improving. Shortly before the 2013 state meet in mid-November, Alcorta committed to run for the University of North Carolina.

"I started doing cross country because I found a sport that I really love," Alcorta said. "... I just followed what I wanted to do and what I really enjoyed doing and it just turned it really well."

Alcorta was one of five Northern Virginia harriers to compete at nationals. Lake Braddock senior Katy Kunc, who started running cross country during her junior year as a way to condition for soccer, finished 19th with a time of

West Springfield's Berglund Reaches 1,000 Career Points

West Springfield guard Amy Berglund looked up in the stands and saw her mom hold up two fingers.

The Spartans were hosting Madison on Dec. 7 and Berglund was closing in on 1,000 career points. Betsy Berglund signaled to her daughter, letting the Spartan senior know she needed two more points to reach the milestone.

With about a minute remaining in the fourth quarter, Berglund dropped in a reverse layup, giving her 21 points for the game and 1,000 for her career. Along with the personal achievement, Berglund helped the West Springfield girls' basketball team beat Madison, 63-50.

"It was really special scoring my 1,000th point because it was a culmination of so much time and effort that I have put into basketball," Berglund wrote in an email. "It was especially great reaching that mark in a tough game against a strong Madison team."

Berglund is a four-year varsity starter for the Spartans. She's been part of two Patriot District championship teams, one Northern Region championship team and twice experienced the state tournament, including a trip to the state semifinals as a freshman. She was a first-team all-region selection as a junior.

"It became my goal to score a 1,000 points after my freshman year," Berglund wrote, "because I had scored almost 300 that year and I realized it was definitely a reachable goal."

Berglund averaged 18.4 points through West Springfield's first five games



COURTESY PHOTO

West Springfield's Amy Berglund, seen during her junior season, recently scored her 1,000th career point.

this season. The Spartans started 5-0, including a 54-53 victory over T.C. Williams on Dec. 13, during which Berglund scored 11 points. T.C. Williams won the Patriot District title last season, snapping West Springfield's streak of three consecutive district championships.

"The TC game was such an intense game and it was an amazing team win," Berglund wrote. "We were super excited to get the win over the tough opponent that TC is. It is a positive step toward our team goal of winning the district title. I think that our team still has many things to improve on and we know that every opponent is going to put up a tough fight so we focus on one game at a time."

West Springfield will travel to face Lake Braddock at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 20.

— JON ROETMAN

18:07.2.

"It was a really great experience," Kunc said. "I never would imagine myself racing at such a high level since I just started last year."

Senior Hannah Christen, Kunc's teammate at Lake Braddock, finished 21st with a time of 18:07.3.

Kunc said having Christen at the meet made things "so much more comfortable."

IN THE BOYS' RACE, Edison senior Louis Colson finished 32nd with a time of 15:58.7, and George C. Marshall senior Mackenzie Haight took 34th with a time of 16:06.1.

Grant Fisher, a junior from Grand Blanc, Mich., won the event with a time of 15:06.5.

"I'm disappointed with how I fin-

ished," Haight said. "My goal was (to finish in the) top 15 for All-American. I don't think I executed my race how I planned it. I wanted to run an aggressive race and I found myself at the back of the pack."

While Haight wasn't pleased with his finish, he said he enjoyed the experience. The five Northern Virginia harriers arrived in San Diego on Thursday, Dec. 12 and returned home on Sunday. Kunc said the runners felt like "professional athletes" and were treated like "royalty."

"It's incredible," said Haight, who will compete for William and Mary next year. "The entire experience was surreal — one of the best weekends I've ever had in my life. I would never trade the experience for anything."

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OPINION

Obama Care and the Individual Market — Not a Failure

BY ELLIOT K. WICKS, PH. D.

Recent news stories have focused on people who bought health insurance in the individual market, rather than through an employer, and whose policies have been canceled. Some then found that coverage available through the new "Obamacare" Marketplaces (or Exchanges) is more expensive. Their anger is understandable, but the issue needs to be put in context.

A great many of those losing coverage and facing higher premiums were the beneficiaries of the insurers' policies that denied coverage to the really sick and charged very high rates to the moderately unhealthy.

Without the reforms of the Affordable Care Act, insurers would continue to deny coverage to many thousand of people with pre-existing conditions and charge unaffordable premiums to older Americans or those with less than stellar health.

The new law prohibits such discrimination in the individual market: no one can be denied coverage or charged more because of a pre-existing condition, and an older person cannot be charged more than three times as much as a younger person. Thus, differences in premiums for people with different risk levels will be greatly reduced starting in January.

If we want to ensure that everyone, regardless of their age or health condition, can get affordable coverage—which Obamacare promises to do—we have to accept the possibility that some people will pay more for coverage. The nature of insurance is that healthy people subsidize sicker people. Healthy people agree to this arrangement simply because they never know when they are going to be part of the unhealthy 10 percent of any population group that accounts for about 70 percent of the costs in any year.

Older or sicker people will incur higher medical expenses. And if they are all now to get coverage and not be forced to pay very high premiums, other insured people, the younger and healthier, will have to pay more than they did in the past—unless substantially more younger and healthier people are brought into the insurance pool. That is why the mandate that everyone have coverage is so important. The premiums these newly insured lower-risk people will pay are necessary to offset the costs of covering the less healthy people who are newly insured.

In short, some people may face higher premiums, but that seems a reasonable price to pay for enhancing fairness and preserving the health of the entire population.

Of course, some people will pay more

because the old insurance policies they had provided woefully inadequate protection that would have left them deep in debt if they had a serious medical event. The Affordable Care Act sets minimum standards for coverage, and so some people who bought these skimpy individual plans lost that coverage. Naturally, when they go to the Marketplace to buy comprehensive replacement coverage, the premium is often higher.

But it is essential to understand that many of these people will be eligible for federal subsidies that make the net cost lower than what they were previously paying. Subsidies to make Marketplace coverage affordable are available to individuals and families well up the income scale—to all with incomes up to 400 percent of the federal poverty level (\$94,200 for a family of four in 2013). The size of the subsidy declines as income increases, but many middle-income people will be eligible for some assistance.

It is also important to keep the big picture in mind. Most people are covered by employer-based insurance, not the individual market. The individual market is a small part of the total insurance market, and many who buy such coverage keep it for only a short period of time, often less than a year. A study by Mathematica Policy Research found that during an average month, only 5.3 percent of the under-65 population had individual coverage, but fewer than half of that population group (2.1 percent) had that coverage for the entire year.

This "churning" is easily explained: many people who buy individual insurance do so as a stop-gap strategy to protect themselves until they get a job that provides better, less expensive coverage. They are people who leave a job that provided health insurance but have not yet found a new job that offers coverage, students who graduate and lose their school-based coverage, or 27 year olds who have "aged out" of their parents' plan.

The fact is that the individual market has never worked well, which is why the ACA focused especially on reforming it. Large premium increases, loss of coverage, and instability have always been characteristic of this poorly functioning market.

The lesson is that now is not the time to endorse legislation like that recently passed in the House that would perpetuate a broken and inequitable individual market and jeopardize the reforms that would bring good, affordable coverage to many thousands who until now have been denied such protection.

The writer is a Reston resident.

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