

Fairfax Station ❖ Clifton ❖ Lorton  
**CONNECTION**

# A Year in a Fast Lane

NEWS, PAGE 5

In early April 2013, crews took down the Telegraph Road overpass over I-95 in the Quantico area. This bridge was rebuilt over the summer and fall.

## State, Local Officials Rally Behind FBI in Springfield

NEWS, PAGE 3

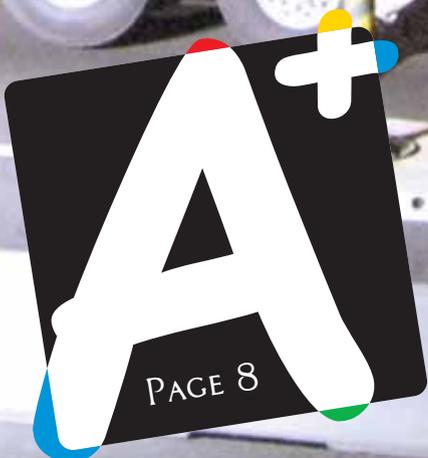
## Food Assistance Cuts Affecting Locals

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FOLLOW ON TWITTER: @LFCSCONNECTION

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PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/VIRGINIA MEGAPROJECTS



## 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 Liv-

ing Nativity, as the seemingly impromptu dialog shows the harsh realities people faced during the time of the census thousands of years ago.

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](http://www.christmasinbethlehem.org)



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Rev. Joe Acanfora plays a rabbi.

## Man Robbed in Clifton

Fairfax County police are seeking the people who robbed a man, Friday night, in the 6100 block of Clifton Road. According to police, the victim had just parked his vehicle, at 9:50 p.m., when two men approached and demanded money. One of the men displayed a handgun and shot out a window on the victim's vehicle.

Both men then stole cash and property from the victim and fled in a blue sedan. There were no injuries. The suspects were described as black, ages 17-20, and wearing black clothing and masks.

## Don't Drink and Drive

As the holidays approach, Fairfax County police reminds everyone not to drink and drive. SoberRide is offering a free cab ride home every night from now until Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2014. So anyone heading out to enjoy a holiday gathering is urged to designate a driver or call SoberRide at 1-800-200-TAXI between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. to get home safely. (AT&T customers dial #9727). For more information, go to <http://www.wrap.org/soberride/>.

## BULLETIN BOARD

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

### SATURDAY/DEC. 21

**Dog Adoption.** 12-3 p.m. PETCO Greenbriar Towncenter, 13053 Lee Jackson Memorial Highway, Fairfax. [www.hart90.org](http://www.hart90.org)

### MONDAY/DEC. 23

**Pohick Prose Society.** 7-8:30 p.m. Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Teens talk about books. Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi. Registration required. Book discussion for age 13-18. 703-644-7333.

### THURSDAY/DEC. 26

**Polar Bear Reading Club.** 10 a.m. Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Join the club. Read five books and choose a prize from the treasure chest. Do it again and again in January and February. Age birth-12. 703-644-7333.

### FRIDAY/DEC. 27

**Polar Bear Reading Club.** 10 a.m. Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Join the club. Read five books and choose a prize from the treasure chest. Do it again and again in January and February. Age birth-12. 703-644-7333.

**Fun Flicks.** 10:30-11:15 a.m. Watch movies based on children's books. Call for the titles. Cosponsored by the Friends of the Pohick Regional Library. Registration required. All ages. 703-644-7333.

# A NEW YEAR'S STATE OF MIND

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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."

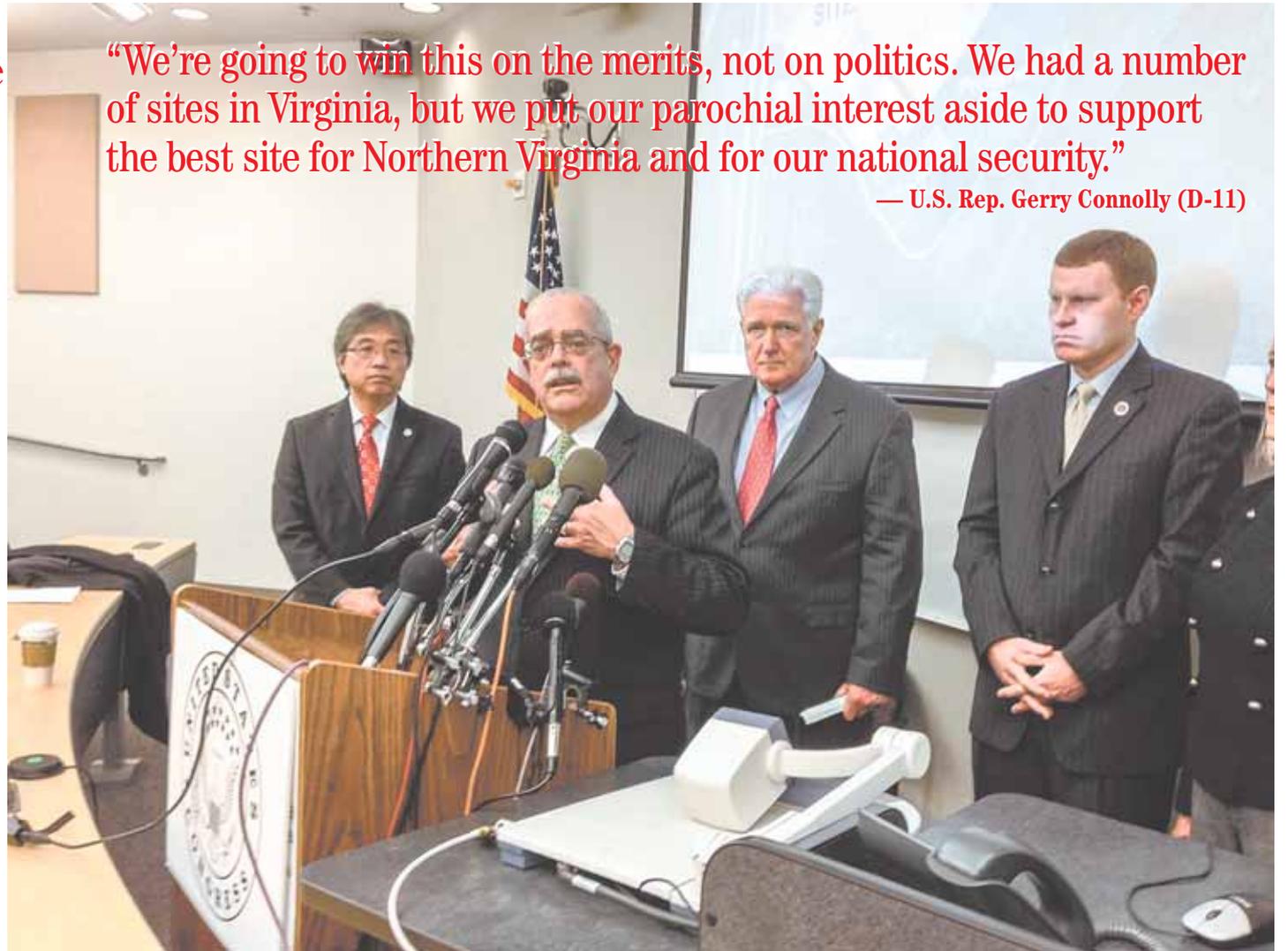
Wolf, who chairs the appropriations subcommittee overseeing the FBI, said the site is ideally located, with easy access to the CIA and Quantico.

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."

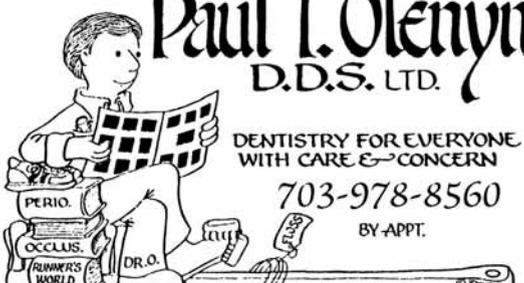
McKay said the benefits to the federal government of relocating to Springfield "would be substantial."

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.

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—Sir Philip Gibbs

## NEWS

The National Trust for Historic Preservation will evict these horses from Woodlawn.



PHOTO BY  
MICHAEL LEE POPE/  
THE CONNECTION

## Seasons Greetings

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**THE CONNECTION**

# Woodlawn Reinvented

Horses will be evicted in favor of new interpretation focusing on agriculture and gardening.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE  
THE CONNECTION

In the coming year, the National Trust for Historic Preservation will step aside and let a non-profit organization known as Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture take control of operations and interpretation. The move will mark a drastic departure for the plantation estate, which will discontinue its longstanding relationship with Woodlawn Stables. The horses will become a thing of the past and the museum will feature new interpretation that leaders at the National Trust hope will expand into a destination for visitors to eat, learn and garden.

“What you usually would not hear on a tour here is much about the agricultural history — why this was part of Mount Vernon originally, how Washington farmed this area, why he thought that this particular site where we are standing would be, as he called it, a great seat for a gentleman,” said John Riley, interim director at Woodlawn. “The Trust is going to look at the agricultural history through Arcadia and with Arcadia, which predates equestrian facilities by 100 years here.”

That means the end of an era for the Mount Vernon neighborhood, where Woodlawn Stables has been a popular destination and a cherished memory for many families through the generations. For more than 30 years, the business has leased a property at the southeast corner of Route 1 and Mount Vernon Memorial Highway. That longstanding history was challenged last year when officials at the Federal Highway Administration began an effort to widen Route 1, a process that will eventually lead to demolition of Woodlawn Stables.

“Naturally, we are disappointed,” said Cynthia Mitchell, owner of Woodlawn Stables. “It does seem as if our roots have gotten pushed a little further away from us, and we tend to be pushing businesses such as this one that provides jobs in the local community out further and further.”

SINCE WOODLAWN was acquired by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and opened as a museum, visitors have learned about the story of Nelly Custis Lewis and Lawrence Lewis. But they would not have learned much about the agricultural history of the site — why it was part of the original Mount Vernon estate and how George Washington farmed the area. By the time Woodlawn opens again in the spring of 2015, leaders at Arcadia hope to have transformed the experience.

“We hope to bring a new life back to the house and the grounds, and make it the vibrant center of the community it once was,” said Arcadia founder Michael Babin in a written statement. “We look forward to expanding our farm production, farmer training and our educational programs and sharing Woodlawn’s inspiring agricultural and social history with the region.”

Supporters of Woodlawn Stables say they are devastated by the news, especially considering the federal mitigation money that will be available because of the demolition of the existing stables. Some were holding out hope that the National Trust would incorporate horses into their property after Route 1 was widened. Now that it’s clear that won’t happen, supporters of the stable say they hope the federal money might be earmarked for a barn at the equestrian center at Laurel Hill in Lorton.

“We’re saddened to see that they have decided to go with a path that strays away from Woodlawn’s history,” said Shelley Castle, founder of a group known as Save Woodlawn Stables. “This has been a horse farm or livestock for more than a century, and we think this greatly diminishes the historic value of the property.”

LEADERS AT THE TRUST disagree with that interpretation. They say Arcadia’s new focus on agriculture will return the property to its roots, a time when George Washington sought tenants to farm parts of 8,000 acres of Mount Vernon estate. Like Washington, the Trust is now hoping its new tenant might plant a seed for future generations by recreating the Woodlawn experience.

“Washington came to the realization that tobacco — year after year — was going to ruin his land, and that’s why a lot of people were moving out west to find new land. But he didn’t want to move west,” said Riley. “So he hoped he was creating an example for American farmers in terms of being able to stay on the land you were on and making fruitful.”

# 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](mailto: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.**

PHOTO BY TREVOR WRAYTON/VDOT



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## 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](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

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PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN ROGERS

## John Lewett Honored with Life Membership

Joan Rogers, President of The Friends of The Fairfax Station, presented a Life Membership for John Lewett to John's son, Sean Lewett, at the 24th annual Fairfax Station Railroad Museum's Holiday Train Show the weekend of Dec. 7 and 8. John Lewett, owner of JL Tree Service, Inc. has provided hundreds of hours of donated tree work service to the Museum as well as being a great supporter of the Museum activities for many years.

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## 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 re-

sponses, 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.

For complete results, visit [www.fcps.edu](http://www.fcps.edu). To sign up for the FCPS community newsletter, visit [www.fcps.edu/kit/](http://www.fcps.edu/kit/).

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# Home for the Holidays: Surviving a Long Trip

**Keeping children entertained on lengthy airplane rides.**

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

**L**iz 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 set-

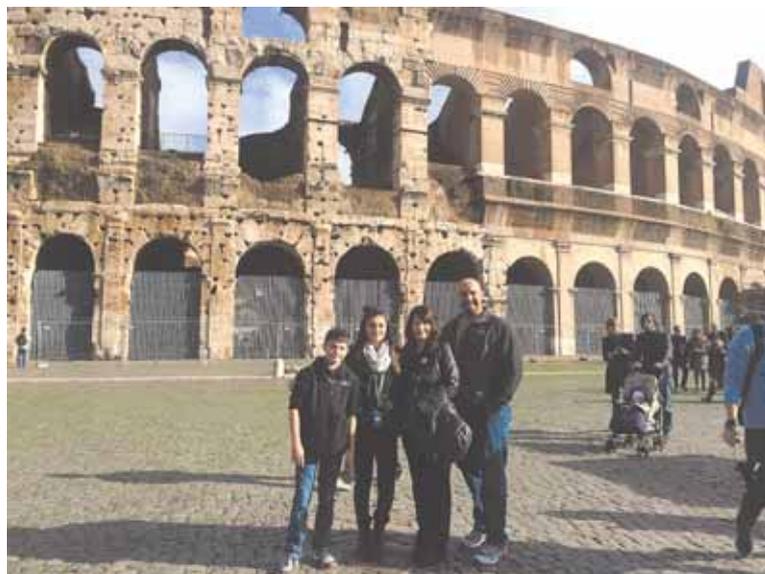


PHOTO COURTESY OF LEN ANNETTA

**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.**

ting 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 firsthand experience 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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## Laura Angela Marcantonio, Ryan Lee Stiles Engaged

Mr. and Mrs. Palmer Marcantonio of Virginia Beach are happy to announce the engagement of their daughter, Laura Angela, to Ryan Lee Stiles. Ryan is the son of Ms. Audrey Stiles of Williamsburg and Mr. Ronald Stiles of Virginia Beach.

The bride is a 2003 graduate of Lake Braddock Secondary School, a 2007 graduate of James Madison University with a Bachelor of Science in Sociology, and a 2013 graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University with a Master of Science in Nursing in Women's Health. She is employed by CJW Medical Center in Richmond.

The groom is a 2000 graduate of Jamestown High School, a 2005 graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and is a current Master of Business Administra-



**Ryan Lee Stiles and Laura Angela Marcantonio**

tion candidate at the University of Richmond's Robins School of Business. He is employed by the University of Richmond.

Laura and Ryan look forward to celebrating with their family and friends in Charlottesville, Va., next September.

The Celebration Singers perform at St. John's United Methodist Church in Springfield on Sunday.



PHOTOS BY STEVE HIBBARD/ THE CONNECTION

# In Harmony With Celebration Singers

Springfield show choir has been going strong 40 years.

BY STEVE HIBBARD  
THE CONNECTION

The all-volunteer Celebration Singers performed their final holiday concert of the year on Sunday, Dec. 15 at St. John's United Methodist Church in Springfield. The group started at Springfield Methodist Church in the 1960s by the name of the Wesleyan Singers. Some of the ladies have been singing together for 40-plus years. And through the years, membership has reached 66 people, but has since dwindled to 18.

The all-female ensemble sings three, four, and five-part harmonies with huge audience interaction. They sing and dance at nursing homes, assisted-living facilities, benefits for Make-a-Wish and the Salvation

Army, Fischer House at Walter Reed Hospital, and even the White House.

Anne Miller, 77, of Fairfield, Va., near Lexington, started directing the group in 1971 and has remained ever since. "It's just something I love," said Miller who has been singing since age 6 and hails from Clinton, Okla. "I love to direct, I love to sing and I love to make people happy."

Miller was married to Grant Miller, an Air Force Lawyer, and directed the Tripoli Choral Society while they were stationed in Libya. She received a master's degree in vocal performance from the University of Hawaii in 1969 and moved to Northern Virginia in 1971. That year, she performed in the Leonard Bernstein Mass at the grand opening of The Kennedy Center in front of Jackie Kennedy.

Betty Aldrich, 70, of Falls Church says Miller is amazing in her ability to pull out choral perfection from the group. "She teaches us how to center," said Aldrich who's been a member since the mid-1980s.

SEE CELEBRATING, PAGE 11



Anne Miller conducts the audience at St. John's United Methodist Church in Springfield on Sunday.



Nora Steiger, 85, of Springfield plays a washtub bass using a broomstick and one string, sometimes called a "stumpf-fiddle."

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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](http://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-o-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 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.



PHOTO BY LUKE RATRAY

**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.**

## 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.

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.

## TUESDAY/DEC. 24

**Christmas Caroling. 4:30 p.m.** Cranford United Methodist Church,

## 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](http://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>.

## CALENDAR

Send notes to the Connection at [south@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:south@connectionnewspapers.com) or call 703-778-9416. The deadline is the Friday prior to the next paper's publication. Dated announcements should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event. For more entertainment events in the county, go to: <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2013/sep/26/fairfax-county-calendar/>.

## WEDNESDAY/DEC. 18-SUNDAY/JAN. 5

**100 Under 200: 100 Artists Exhibiting Work Priced Less than \$200.** Workhouse Arts, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. Free flowing and ever changing; the exhibit will have new art on view each week.

**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.

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## NEWS

# Celebrating in Harmony

FROM PAGE 9

"She gets a beautiful sound with us."

Jenny Squire, 64, of Springfield, who wrote the script and emceed along with Karen Weinberg, agrees: "She gets from our group a sound that nobody else could get." Squire is also passionate about performing live at nursing homes and hospitals. "It provides them with a window on the world that they can access," she said. "We provide live entertainment, which means it's one-on-on." She loves to see responses like foot tapping or people mouthing words. After a performance, the singers usually go out and shake hands and greet people. "It's all about reaching them," she adds.

For their Christmas Show on Sunday, the group wore brightly colored handmade costumes and danced to the choreographed songs, "O Holy Night," "Hanukkah's Child," "Christmas Waltz," and "African Advent Carol," among others.

For Willa Lutz, 64, of Falls Church, she enjoys the friends she's known for 20 years. "I like to sing and dance," she added.

Nora Steiger, 85, of Springfield has been singing with the group for 40 years. She plays a washtub bass using a broomstick and one string, sometimes called a "stumpf-fiddle." She calls Miller "very patient and gentle."

Lydia Garner, 62, a one-year member from Sterling, says Miller adds humor to the mix. She says



PHOTO BY STEVE HIBBARD/THE CONNECTION

### Karen Pruitt of Vienna dances to "Hanukkah's Child."

she loves "the gratification of knowing I brought a smile to people's faces."

For Karen Weinberg, 58, the Celebration Singers is "like a family." She enjoys the camaraderie and says it's more than just singing. "We get as much out of the performance as (the audience) does."

"It's really like a big caring family of all sisters," added Gayle Parsons, 63, of Springfield, a pianist who's been with the group six years.

After Labor Day, the group goes to the Middlebrook Retreat Center for two days where they begin practicing the songs and choreographing the moves. After polishing the show for about three months at Burke United Methodist Church, they are ready to give their holiday concert.

Alice Groenig, 64, directs a subgroup called "Sounds of Joy," that does smaller shows with eight singers. A member for 28 years, she enjoys "the joy and happiness of seeing people's faces who don't get to see live entertainment."

Celebration Singers is always looking for new members. If interested in joining, email Jenny Squire at [JennySquire@yahoo.com](mailto:JennySquire@yahoo.com).

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**Christmas Day Service:**

December 25th, 10 am



# 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

**C**aroline 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.

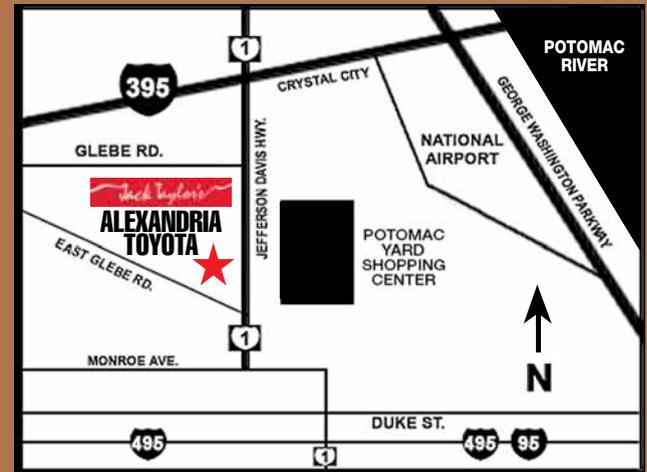
The fact is that the individual market has never worked well, which is why the ACA focused especially on reforming it. Large premium increases, loss of coverage, and instability have always been characteristic of this poorly functioning market.

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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PHOTO BY LISA SPINELLI/THE CONNECTION

A woman picks up her monthly food donations from Food for Others in Fairfax.



PHOTO BY JANELLE GERMANOS/THE CONNECTION

Lisa Whetzel, executive director of Our Daily Bread, holds up an advertisement of the organization that encouraged donations.

# Food Assistance Cuts Affecting Locals

Cuts to the food stamp program are hitting local beneficiaries and food banks.

BY LISA SPINELLI  
THE CONNECTION

**M**elinda Anderson, 50, of Alexandria is feeling the extra pinch to her federally-subsidized food budget.

"I have had to eat less and hit up more food banks in the area just to survive," she said while collecting her monthly food allotment from the Fairfax-based food-bank Food for Others. "I'm visiting three [food banks] a month now."

Anderson and the other 456,626 Virginians are amongst the 47.7 million Americans enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—also known as food stamps, all of whom had their monthly food benefits cut on Nov. 1, after a four-year temporary boost from the Recovery and Reinvestment Act (RRA) expired. Virginia experienced a \$99 million cut last month when the boost ended. For Anderson, a childless adult, her food benefits went down \$11 a month to leave her with a max amount of \$189 per month. A family of four is receiving \$36 less a month from a max benefit of \$668 to \$632. And more cuts could be on the horizon once Congress reconvenes next year.

"We've seen a definite increase in referrals for food since the November first reduction," said Lisa Whetzel, executive di-

rector of Our Daily Bread, a Fairfax-based nonprofit servicing local disadvantaged families. Her nonprofit receives referrals from social workers on who should be admitted into their food assistance program. "These single mothers, or people with very low income, they need this assistance in order to just make ends meet or to just keep the lights on—especially in this area. I've heard some people say that cutting SNAP is doing the poor a favor—I disagree."

**THE REDUCTION** isn't necessarily a cut, as many politicians will argue, because the benefits were always intended as a temporarily boost, not a long-term payment-plan. But the Bureau of Labor Statistics puts the total national unemployment rate at 7.9, which is 0.1 percent higher than in 2009 when the RRA boost was enacted—hardly a major recovery. The D.C.-metro area has not recovered well either, being tied in October with the Boston area for the largest metropolitan unemployment rate increase over the last year at 0.6 percent, landing the D.C. area at a 5.9 unemployment rate.

While the total unemployment rate in the metro-area is low compared to the worst-hit parts of the nation—though D.C. by itself ranks amongst the highest at 9.9 percent, the increase in unemployment hints

there is not an instrumental economic growth happening in the area. Without economic growth, those relying on SNAP to feed their children, and themselves, are left scrambling.

"I'm working as a CNA (certified nursing assistant), but it's never steady. We have to come here after everything is finished," said Amany Hussein, 47 of Alexandria, about visiting Food for Others. Hussein said even with her job, being in the SNAP program, and her husband's two jobs as a pizza delivery man and taxi operator, they are still unable to feed themselves and their two teenagers after paying their \$1700 monthly rent.

Executive Director of Food for Others Roxanne Rice said she sees first-hand the growing economic problems in the area. As she compared the number of patrons to her food bank from last October to this October, she saw a staggering 28 percent increase—and the SNAP reductions are only going to add to her figures for November, she said.

Those enrolled in SNAP could have even more cuts to fear next year. The Republican-led U.S. House of Representatives recently passed a bill cutting the program by \$39 billion over the next 10 years and is awaiting Senate approval. While the cuts are unlikely to pass, even the Senate is looking to cut \$4.5 billion over 10 years from the most expensive food stamp program the nation has ever seen—\$80 billion a year. The House bill as it stands would potentially cut 3.8 million Americans from the program entirely within the first year, and

could especially hurt families with children.

**AT LEAST FOR NOW**, the Fairfax County Public School system has been picking up some of the bill for those children in need, said Food and Nutrition Director Penny E. McConnell. While all children whose families are enrolled in SNAP, homeless children or children in foster-care receive a free lunch during school days, there are

**"We've seen a definite increase in referrals for food since the November 1st reduction."**

— Lisa Whetzel,  
executive director of Our Daily Bread

disadvantaged children who fall between the cracks. With the proposed SNAP cuts, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, predicts many children across the nation will lose their free lunches.

"It doesn't help anybody to cut food stamps," said Rice. "Increasing minimum wages, encouraging ways to end disparity of income in our society is definitely needed, but that has nothing to do with helping people in other ways."