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Barbara Comstock's Richmond Diary

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Artist Rima Schulkind's series of sculptures lends a new life to obsolete technology at McLean Project for the Arts latest exhibition, "Contraptions: Reflections on the Almost Functional."



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Del. Comstock Shares Her Notes on Opening Week

A new beginning, a new chairmanship and a new legislative session.

BY BARBARA COMSTOCK
STATE DELEGATE (R-34)

Wednesday, Jan. 8 – Symbolic of the Opening Day

It is always an honor to be part of the oldest continuous legislative body in the western world. On Jan. 8, we began a new session with a new Administration. The session is always kicked off early in the morning (7 a.m.) with the annual Commonwealth Prayer Breakfast. In keeping with tradition, outgoing Governor McDonnell and incoming Governor McAuliffe and senior government officials attend. This year I had the honor of offering the prayer for State Legislators at the Commonwealth Prayer Breakfast. The breakfast also features guest speakers every year and everyone was moved by the powerful testimony of Thomas Haynesworth, a truly inspirational man, who was exonerated in 2011 after being wrongfully imprisoned for 27 years for crimes he did not commit. Mr. Haynesworth spoke of his faith sustaining him throughout this unjust ordeal.

Opening day is also the day that we file our legislation for the session. Some of the bills I filed include a bill to provide a new sexual and domestic violence subfund to consolidate resources for sexual and domestic violence victims and for prevention; legislation to increase our Research and Development tax credit to assist our high tech industry; legislation to provide more in-state spots for our college students; and legislation to allow local school boards to determine the start date of our schools. I also filed several bills to continue our efforts to battle human trafficking.

When Session officially convened at noon on Jan. 8, I had the honor of nominating the Hon. William J. Howell as Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates. The Speaker was unanimously re-elected. We also had 14 new members of the House of Delegates get sworn in with us on the first day of session.

In the evening of the first day of the session, the Governor presents his “State of the Commonwealth” speech. Governor McDonnell gave an overview of his proposed budget and a review of his Administration priorities and accomplishments. After the speech, again by tradition, the Governor invites all of the legislators to the Governor’s mansion where we had the opportunity to visit with members of Governor McDonnell’s cabinet — many of whom were ending their service to the Com-

monwealth.

Thursday, Jan. 9 – Constituents Come to Richmond

In the opening days of the session, we also have many groups and constituents come to visit. Thursday was the annual Banker Day at the Capitol, and my office had the opportunity to meet with bankers from Capital One, Wells Fargo, and Chain Bridge Bank. We also had visits from Military Officers of America Association (MOAA), NASA, Canine Companions, who train companion dogs, child advocacy groups, local Chamber representatives, and the Richmond Justice Initiative which works with us on human trafficking issues.

Every year the Virginia Federation of Republican Women also has their annual Richmond day and all of our Republican legislators take the opportunity to visit and have lunch with their local club members who are visiting



RICHMOND
DIARY



Del. Barbara Comstock (R-34) speaks about her bills at a human trafficking press conference with the Richmond Justice Initiative. Joining her in the photo (from left) are Del. Vivian Watts, Sara Pomeroy (founder of the Richmond Justice Initiative), Del. Marcus Simon and Del. David Bulova.

from around the Commonwealth. I had the opportunity to speak before the VFRW and greet many of our local members who came down for the day and to thank them for all they do.

Friday, Jan. 10 – Promoting Tech Industry

This year I am the new chairwoman of the Science and Technology Committee, so in the opening days I have been meeting with the committee staff to plan the committee’s work and review legislation that will come before the Committee. Del. Rich Anderson who was elected with me in 2009 and has served on the committee for

four years with me, is serving as my vice-chairman on the committee. Given the importance of the tech industry to our local and state economy, it is a great privilege to work with the tech community on promoting this industry in our Commonwealth and work with the large group of talented entrepreneurs and experts in this field. I invite any and all of our tech entrepreneurs and leaders to contact us about how we can continue to keep Virginia on the cutting edge of technology at all levels. We also are fortunate in the General Assembly to work with the Northern Virginia Technology Council (NVTC), of which I am a member. They represent the tech community and are among the best advocates in Richmond on promoting Virginia jobs.

Saturday, Jan. 11 – Governor’s Inauguration

I attended Governor-elect Terry McAuliffe’s Inauguration ceremony on Saturday as a member of the Inaugural Committee. A bipartisan group of members from the House and the Senate are appointed as

Retail Worries

October numbers artificially inflated; holiday numbers could spell trouble.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

The partial government shutdown was more than an October surprise during the race for governor. Newly available statistics from the Virginia Department of Taxation show the month was also an unexpected boost to sales tax revenues across the commonwealth. Fairfax County, for example, recorded a 15.5 percent spike in sales tax revenue in October 2013 compared to October 2012. But state and local officials say that’s because several major department stores neglected to increase their sales tax rate to reflect the new regional tax for transportation when the new fiscal year began in July. So the October numbers represent the backlog of uncollected revenues.

Which retailers flubbed their taxes?

“That’s proprietary information, so we can’t say,” said Marcia Wilds, revenue and economic analysis coordinator with the Fairfax County Department of Management and Budget. “They’re big.”

The revenue corrections came at a key time for local governments, a month that many expected to be particularly bleak. Many government workers and contractors were out of work in October, when local governments became concerned that spending habits might reflect a sense of uncertainty about the future. Now budget officials across Northern Virginia are worried about what kind of sales tax revenue they’ll collect from the holiday season.

“The sales tax will be back with holiday sales,” said Stephen Fuller, director of the Center for Regional Analysis at George Mason University. “Over the year there will only a minor weakening.”

BUDGET OFFICIALS are not so sure. As local governments across the region prepare for the first round of budgeting next month, a sense of uncertainty looms over the revenue projections and spending priorities. Part of that is the unemployment rate, which remains at about 6 percent across Virginia. That means consumers may hold back on consumption based spending, which would mean lower revenues for local governments on retail sales and restaurant meals.

“If revenues continue to decline, it may be necessary to make up any additional shortfalls with expenditure reductions,”

SEE DEL. COMSTOCK, PAGE 13

SEE SALES TAX, PAGE 13



PHOTO COURTESY OF FELISHA GASKINS/ENDLESS EXPRESSIONS PHOTOGRAPHY
Andrew Young sat before a packed house at the Alden Theatre on Friday, Jan. 17.

Young Speaks about Civil Rights, King's Legacy

"A Continuing Legacy" speaking series came to McLean Community Center's theater.

BY ETHAN MCLEOD
THE CONNECTION

"When you talk about the tenure and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, it's something I've now been struggling with for 45 years," said Andrew Young to a crowd in the McLean Community Center's Alden Theatre.

Christian Leadership Conference, right up to the day King was assassinated in Memphis, Tenn. in 1968.

Visitors from throughout Northern Virginia came to see Young speak about his career and views on issues such as racism and world poverty. Avis Bracey, who traveled from Woodbridge, has followed Young's career as a former congressman, mayor of Atlanta and civil rights leader since she was a child.

"I know a lot of people don't really take the time to commemorate Dr. King's legacy, but I always make sure I take the time during that day every year," said Bracey.

Young reflected on how he and his fellow movement members were religiously devoted to their peaceful protesting. "We believed there was something inside, and we didn't count the costs or make the plans," said Young. "We just took it one step at a time and it happened."

According to Young, there were "three evils" that the world had to deal with: racism, war, and poverty. The first two, he said, had been dealt with somewhat, even pointing out the decreasing death tolls over time in major U.S. wars. But poverty, he said, was the one that still clearly remained unresolved.

After his time as a civil rights leader was over, Young had a successful career as a Democratic con-

SEE ANDREW YOUNG, PAGE 7

Art and Function

New MPA exhibit unlocks hidden beauty in everyday gadgets, contraptions, or refuse.

BY LORI BAKER
THE CONNECTION

McLean Project for the Arts hosted a reception on Jan. 16, to celebrate the opening of its latest exhibition, "Contraptions: Reflections on the Almost Functional." The exhibition also includes solo shows by artists, Melissa Burley, and Eric Celarier.

"Contraptions: Reflections on the Almost Functional" exhibition presents a fresh look at some commonplace objects. But their usual functions have been altered or even eliminated, to allow for artistic interest or beauty.

In the main Emerson Gallery, five artists present a variety of works, both two and three-dimensional, that shares their interpretation of the allure of functioning objects. In contrast, some of the creations manage to simulate working contraptions, without including actual working parts. The pieces are whimsical and fun.

Many of the artists have used old debris in an effort to give second life to discarded items. And while not all of the creations represent beauty, absolutely every piece invites contemplation.

The Contraptions exhibition includes sculptures by Rima Schulkind. She refers to her series as the "Detritus of Obsolescent Technology," and in one of her pieces, starts with antiquated cameras, working her way up to a more modern adding machine.

Artist, Stephanie Williams is represented with nearly functional, anatomical-like sculptures. The many possible utilities of her sculptures make them worthy of lengthy inspection. The same goes for her colorful two-dimensional works.

The exhibition also includes watercolors by artist, Blake Hurt, and sculptures by Dymphna DeWild, constructed from items she collects on walks. Her works have an intentional outpost feeling. "They are kind of unstable. But stable enough to stand. They're about survival. The pieces survive," she said. A sculpture by artist, Adam Hager, is a completely dismantled artifact, which has been reconstructed in a compelling fashion.

The Atrium Gallery features sculptures by artist Melissa Burley. Her works use glass, light and everyday objects. The observer is drawn to her works by their features, as well as the lighting in the Atrium itself.

Upon entering the exhibition, viewers will be greeted in the Ramp Gallery by quilt-like pieces fashioned from leather-framed computer plates. Eric Celarier's works offer different perspectives depending on the situation of the observer. They have a cityscape feel from a distance, which encourages a closer look.

The exhibition will be open to the community at the McLean Project for the Arts until March 1.



Dymphna DeWild says her pieces, in a sense, are about survival.



Stephanie Williams' creations include both two and three-dimensional pieces, full of color.



In the Atrium Gallery are works using glass, light and mechanical parts.



Eric Celarier uses reclaimed computer parts and leather in his Wasteland series.

PHOTOS BY LORI BAKER/
THE CONNECTION

Public Weighs Options for Land Swap

Officials reveal three alternatives for Langley Fork Park land swap.

BY ETHAN MCLEOD
THE CONNECTION

McLean residents may see an upgraded Langley Fork Park within the next year, but some are more excited than others about 55 potential new acres of synthetic turf fields, lights, and the crowds that will come with it.

McLean residents received a first glimpse at three alternatives for a revised Langley Fork Park Master Plan presented by National Park Service (NPS) officials on the evening of Tuesday, Jan. 14. The Park Service sought public comment during an evening meeting at Franklin Sherman Elementary about the exchange with Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) of 55 acres at Langley Fork for an equally valued area of 101 acres at neighboring Langley Oaks Park.

The original agreement between NPS and FCPA, formed in 1981, has been renewed each year since it expired in 2005, and has allowed FCPA to maintain the original facilities constructed in 1981 at Langley Fork Park. However, NPS is unable to construct additional facilities to match community demand for new activity spaces at Langley Fork Park.

The FCPA presented the first draft of its Master Plan in its own public comment session Oct. 17 of last year. The Park Service's recent evaluation and revision of FCPA's plan with their own environmental assessment provides for three land usage alternatives.

McLean residents in attendance on Jan. 14 demonstrated mixed feelings about which option they preferred. Alternative 1, in which no land swap takes place and the Park Service maintains control of Langley Fork Park, was the favored option of some community residents who live close to the park and do not want the additional traffic, lights and noise.

"Many of us like our quiet district and do not want two neighbors," said Roberto Mosse, who lives in the Langley Oaks neighborhood.



Alternative 3 provides for far more extensive development of Langley Fork Park, including options for a dog park and additional parking.

SEE PARK SERVICE, PAGE 11



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OPINION

Extend Health Coverage in Virginia

General Assembly should not block coverage for as many as 400,000 uninsured.

Standing on what is essentially scorched earth, Republicans in the Virginia General Assembly have condemned hundreds of thousands of poor Virginians to living without health coverage even though it would be fully funded by Federal money for the next three years, and with Virginia paying 10 percent after five years.

Gov. Terry McAuliffe has pledged to do everything he can to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, and we encourage him to use every creative option available to make that happen. In Ohio, the governor found a legal way to accept the Medicaid funds despite objections from the General Assembly, for example.

Earlier this week, McAuliffe included an amendment to the FY2014 caboose budget bill authorizing the Governor to act in the event that the Medicaid Reform Innovation and Reform Commission (MIRC) fails to decide

EDITORIAL

whether or not to accept federal funding to cover up to 400,000 uninsured Virginians through Medicaid by the end of the current legislative session.

Business groups and chambers of commerce around Virginia, including the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce, support accepting the expansion of Medicaid in Virginia under the Affordable Care Act. One persuasive factor for the business community: The expansion would create an estimated 30,000 jobs. Hospitals support expanding Medicaid which would offset many of the costs of caring for uninsured populations.

It isn't as if there is no health care cost for the uninsured now. Right now, they access health care when they are very sick by going to an emergency room or other clinics, where providers spread the cost of care around. This is inefficient, expensive and unhealthy, including for those of us who do have health insur-

ance. It means unvaccinated and/or sick people are going to work and going about their daily lives putting themselves and others at risk.

As of January 2014, in Virginia, Medicaid eligibility for adults without disability is limited to parents with incomes below 51 percent of poverty, or about \$11,900 a year for a family of four, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. Adults without dependent children remain ineligible regardless of their income.

The General Assembly should not be able to block coverage for as many as 400,000 Virginians basically out of spite. The established excuse, that the Feds can't afford it and can't be counted on to pay the money, doesn't hold water in Virginia, which receives more Federal dollars per capita than any other state but Alaska. If legislators are so concerned about Federal ability to pay, you might expect to see them refusing transportation money, for example, or to turn the possible FBI headquarters away, or thousands of other ways that Federal dollars make their way into Virginia.

— MARY KIMM,

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Comstock Image Versus Record

To the Editor:

Regarding the Connection article "Comstock runs for Congress," Connection, Jan. 15, the Virginia legislature gerrymandered the 10th Congressional District to ensure that Del. Barbara Comstock (R-34) lived in that district so that when Congressman Frank Wolf retired, she would be in a position to run for his seat. In her two terms as a delegate in a body dominated by her party, she has focused on a number of "mom and apple pie" issues like lyme disease (she's against it) and more slots for Northern Virginia students at state universities (she's for that but proposes no way to pay for the increased cost to the universities). In the meantime, she voted against the historic, bi-partisan transportation funding compromise last year, and also opposed the state budget that included greater funding for higher education and teacher pay raises. She also voted numerous times to allow greater access to guns. Yet, when speaking in McLean, she invariably fails to mention these votes and skirts any questions.

Ms. Comstock's polished image and ultra-conservative voting record are designed to let her have it both ways. She hopes to be seen as mainstream by her McLean and Great Falls neighbors, but at the same time rigidly supported the rural interests that dominate the

House of Delegates. Northern Virginia needs a Representative that supports the interests of a growing urban, economically vibrant district. So far, her interest has been just the opposite: lyme disease versus transportation; guns versus education.

Steve Mournighan
McLean

Preserve School Quality

To the Editor:

Our teachers are bringing home less money in their paychecks today than they did in 2010. Seventy percent of teachers at McLean High School need to have second jobs to make ends meet. We've cut our county school support staff to student ratio levels to 50 percent lower than any other school district in the metro area. Fairfax County gets \$1,855 per pupil from state aid while other school districts in the state get on average \$3,420 per pupil due to an antiquated state allocation calculation. And, we continue to look for ways to cut costs in the school operating budget.

Even if the Board of Supervisors votes to give Fairfax County Public Schools the full budget request, which more than likely won't happen because there simply isn't enough money in the county budget to do so, we will still need to increase class sizes pushing some class sizes into 35-plus kids per

class and further cut the number of both teachers and support employees.

This situation is unsustainable if the citizens of Fairfax County want to continue to have a school system that has long been considered a model in the country. If our schools decline due to the inability to attract and retain great teachers, crowded classroom and lack of first class programming for our students, we lose one of the biggest factors why businesses and their employees choose to locate in Fairfax County.

Our new school superintendent, Dr. Karen Garza, is looking for "out of the box" ways to make continual improvements in our schools' abilities to produce great 21st century citizens. That work happens every day consistently and with fervor. But, many of these innovative changes will take years to implement; many will need to plow through the challenges imposed by state and federal regulations like the current largely ineffective Standards of Learning testing and No Child Left Behind legislation.

Our only current short-term solution to increase revenues for the county is in increasing real estate and personal property taxes. No one likes increased taxes, but in the short term, there appears to be no other solution. For a longer-term revenue solution, we should push to have a meals tax, like most of our neighboring communities have. In addition,

we should push to have our elected officials in Richmond re-

visit the way they allocated State Aid for education, which currently takes Fairfax County citizen's state taxes and reallocates them to other areas of the commonwealth.

My youngest is 16. Our family can persevere over her last two years in high school. However, for younger families with kids or citizens who value their attractive real estate values; pay attention now. Go to FCPS.edu to educate yourself on the budget and then communicate your views to your elected officials before Feb. 25, when the county executive advertises the county budget and subsequently the real estate tax rate is announced or one day you'll be asking yourself "how in the world did things get this bad?"

Lastly, if you could read this letter, thank a teacher.

Wilma Cairns Bowers
McLean High School PTSA
President

Write

The Connection welcomes views on any public issue. The deadline for all material is noon Friday. Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers. Letters are routinely edited for libel, grammar, good taste and factual errors. Send to:

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News

Andrew Young Visits Alden Theatre

FROM PAGE 4

gressman from 1973 to 1977 and mayor of Atlanta from 1982 to 1990. As mayor, Young famously transformed the city into an international marketplace by drawing thousands of businesses into the city from overseas.

Young emphasized the power of economic development in dealing with poverty, particularly with the black community in Atlanta.

"We formed a coalition between the business community and the black community," he said. "White people were concerned about profits, black people were concerned about jobs, and really, both groups were saying the same thing."

HALFWAY THROUGH, the former U.N. ambassador opened the event up to questions from audience members.

Chuck Smith of Reston asked how he thought President Obama could deal with vast income inequality within the U.S. due to a majority of the income being owned by the super rich. Young responded that it was difficult for any leader, himself included, to deal with 1 percent controlling all of the country's money, but that the president could still work to enable the poor with economic opportunity.

He cited his own history of using international investment to fight poverty, and said that the same approach could be applied to African countries with slow economies and high poverty.



PHOTO BY ETHAN MCLEOD/THE CONNECTION

Chuck Smith (right) of Reston asks a question to Andrew Young from the audience.

"How can we take the economy to the next level in a way that will stabilize the planet, at least for the next century?" asked Young to the audience.

Despite the world's current inability to properly address poverty and sickness, Young told the audience that he remained optimistic. As a testament to both the civil rights movement's legacy and his own hope for the future, Young quoted King: "All that's necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing."

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ENTERTAINMENT

Musical Approach to Family

“La Cage Aux Folles” arriving at Alden Theater.

BY DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

One of Broadway’s biggest hits, “La Cage Aux Folles” is coming to the Alden courtesy of the McLean Community Players. The long-running musical won six Tony Awards including Best Musical and Best Score when it originally appeared on Broadway. Its two Broadway revivals since have also garnered Tony Awards.

McLean Community Players will give local audiences the opportunity experience its award-winning musical score and memorable characters.

The storyline centers around Georges, the owner of a popular drag nightclub, and Albin, the club’s star. They have been partners for many years. They have raised a son together, Jean-Michel, who has just announced his engagement to Anne, the daughter of a rather conservative politician. The engagement throws everything into topsy-turvy turmoil. All is presented with a big smile and a bigger heart.

“La Cage” was written by a Broadway dream team of Harvey Fierstein, Jerry Herman and Jean Poiret. The original production was directed by Arthur Laurents.

Where and When

McLean Community Players present “La Cage aux Folles” at Alden Theatre, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave. Performances, Jan. 31-Feb. 16. Fridays and Saturdays, 8 p.m.; Sundays 2 p.m. Tickets are \$18-\$20. Visit www.mcleanplayers.org or call 703-790-9223. Note: Audio description services for the visually impaired on Feb. 15.

The McLean Community Players production of “La Cage” with a cast of 25, is directed by veteran actor and director Hans Bachmann. “La Cage aux Folles” at its heart, is a story about family and the sacrifices that parents make to ensure their children’s happiness It is a story most everyone can relate to.”

Musical director John Edwards Niles will have an orchestra of 10 to perform the score of 16 songs. Choreography is by Duane Monahan.

Show song titles include “I Am What I Am” with a lyric “I am my own special creation.” and “Look Over There” with the line, “How often is someone concerned with the tiniest thread of your life? Concerned with whatever you feel?”

Cast member Tim Adams (Jean-Michel) called “La Cage” “just a wonderful story about an everyday loving family.” Actor Christopher Furry (Albin) said, “everyone can relate to this show ... it is just so sincere in telling about people who care for each other in a centered relationship.”

Harv Lester (Georges) said audiences will find it an “hilarious show about a strong family relationship. It is a little over-the-top but so easy to enjoy.”

“La Cage’s” previous community theater production in the area was about a decade ago. Inviting audiences to see the optimistic “La Cage aux Folles,” actor Lisa Anne Bailey called it a show about an “accepting family and not just about feathers and glitter.”



PHOTO BY TRACI J. BROOKS STUDIOS

Jean-Michel (Tim Adams) gets a lesson in family responsibility from Georges (Harv Lester).

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THURSDAY/JAN. 23

Music from Oberlin at Oakton, 10th Season! 7:30 p.m. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. The Darwin String Quartet performing works by Mendelssohn, Haydn, and Piazzolla. 703-842-3156

FRIDAY-SATURDAY/JAN. 24 & 25

"THIS." 8 p.m. Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. "THIS" is a bright, tart, and melancholy comedy that captures the uncertain steps of a circle of friends entering the choppy waters of middle age. Contains adult language; for theatre-goers over 16. www.viennatheatrecompany.org/

SATURDAY/JAN. 25

Gustafer Yellowgold's Show. 10:30 a.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave E, Vienna. Groovy Gustafer Yellowgold is a small, yellow, cone-headed fellow, who came to Earth from the Sun and has a knack for finding himself neck-deep in absurd situations as he explores his new life in the Minnesota woods. Equal parts pop rock concert and animated storybook, Gustafer Yellowgold concerts are a truly different multimedia experience that entrances children and adults alike. Tickets: \$10. <https://jamminjava.com/events/gustafer-yellowgold>

"Othello." 8 p.m. McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave, McLean.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Visitors enjoy a chocolate fountain from Capitol Chocolate Fountains at the 2012 McLean Chocolate Festival. This year's festival will be Sunday, Jan. 26 at McLean Community Center.

Tickets: \$20 MCC District residents and \$30 for non MCC District residents. Visit: www.aldentheatre.org or call 703-790-0123.

SUNDAY/JAN. 26

McLean Chocolate Festival. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. McLean Community Center. Wide variety of chocolate vendors. Plenty of parking. Children's game room with chocolate-themed games. Admission fee is \$2, with \$1 going toward the purchase of chocolate. Kids under 6 get in free. McLean Rotary uses proceeds to fund local charitable organizations. www.mcleanchocolatefestival.org.

Music from Oberlin at Oakton. 7:30 p.m. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Music from Oberlin at Oakton hosts current Oberlin Conservatory students three times a year to provide top-notch music to the local community. In its 14th season, this program will feature two pianists, a percussionist, and a soprano. 703-281-4230

You Can Change Your World. 10 a.m. Great Falls UMC, 10100 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. A sermon service hosted by Great Falls United Methodist Church.

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 10

Bang the Drum Slowly
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McLEAN COMMUNITY PLAYERS

ESCAPE TO THE FABULOUS NIGHTCLUB ON THE FRENCH RIVIERA!

LA CAGE AUX FOLLES

BOOK BY HARVEY FIERSTEIN

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JAN. 31-FEB. 16

FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS 8:00 P.M.

SUNDAYS 2:00 P.M.

TICKETS

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Audio description services for the visually impaired will be offered at the performance on February 15.

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La Cage aux Folles is presented by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 9

MONDAY/JAN. 27

Fuse Box. 7:30 p.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Avenue East, Vienna. A guitar-driven, rock 'n roll band. Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$13 day of the show, and are on sale now at www.jamminjava.com.

FRIDAY/JAN. 31

"THIS." 8 p.m. Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. "THIS" is a bright, tart, and melancholy comedy that captures the uncertain steps of a circle of friends entering the choppy waters of middle age. Contains adult language; for theatre-goers over 16. www.viennatheatrecompany.org/

FRIDAY/JAN. 31-SATURDAY/FEB. 1

La Cage aux Folles. 8 p.m. Alden Theatre, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Book by Harvey Fierstein, music and lyrics by Jerry Herman, based on the novel by Jean Poiret. Georges, the owner of a popular drag nightclub in San Tropez, and Albin, the club's star, have lived in unwedded bliss for 20 years. Jean-Michel, the son they have raised together, throws the happy household into hilarious turmoil by announcing that he is going to marry the daughter of an ultra-conservative politician. www.McLeanPlayers.org or 866-811-4111.

SATURDAY/FEB. 1

Ballroom Dance. 8-9 p.m. Samba lesson, 9-11:30 p.m. dance. Colvin Run Dance Hall, 10201 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Live music from



PHOTO BY JOCELYN STEINER

From left: Shannon Benton and Rikki Howie rehearsing for the play "THIS," a comedy that captures the uncertain steps of a circle of friends entering the choppy waters of middle age. Starts Jan. 24 at the Vienna Community Center.

Mike Surratt & the ECB playing favorite dance tunes from the 1930s to today. Attire is ballroom casual, no partner or experience is needed. \$20 for the evening. 703-759-2685 or www.colvinrun.org.

Arts for Autism Gala. 6:30 p.m. Tower Club, 8000 Towers Crescent Drive, #1700, Vienna. An evening that brings together the arts, fashion and autism communities to benefit individuals and families affected by Autism. Festivities include a reception, dinner and silent auction. www.arts-for-autism.org

Tropez, and Albin, the club's star, have lived in unwedded bliss for twenty years. Jean-Michel, the son they have raised together, throws the happy household into hilarious turmoil by announcing that he is going to marry the daughter of an ultra-conservative politician. www.McLeanPlayers.org or 866-811-4111.

SATURDAY/FEB. 1, 7, 8

"THIS." 8 p.m. Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. "THIS" is a bright, tart, and melancholy comedy that captures the uncertain steps of a circle of friends entering the choppy waters of middle age. Contains adult language; for theatre-goers over 16. www.viennatheatrecompany.org/

SUNDAY/FEB. 2

La Cage aux Folles. 2 p.m. Alden Theatre, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Georges, the owner of a popular drag nightclub in San

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THE CONNECTION
NEWSPAPERS

NEWS

Park Service Presents Revised Plan Options

FROM PAGE 5

Alternative 2 provides for the full swap of 55 acres for the 101 acres at Langley Oaks, and partial development that includes varying field sizes, lights, and potentially a pavilion and dog park. Alternative 3, the favorite of youth sports advocates and pet owners, is a more expansive version of Alternative 2 that includes installation of new synthetic turf fields on the right side of the park, a dog park, additional pavilions, and expanded parking.

NPS OFFICIALS ALSO explained the outcome of the swap on Langley Oaks Park, which backs up to the George Washington Memorial Parkway, also owned by the National Park Service. In accordance with the National Environmental Protection Act, the Park Service must conduct an environmental assessment. "The National Park Service has no plans to further develop the land at Langley Oaks Park if the swap takes place other than adding NPS signage for trails,

according to Thomas Sheffer, NPS Park Planner at George Washington Memorial Parkway. "The intention is to preserve the Potomac Gorge resource area in its natural form."

The Park Services Office of Value Appraisal determined that the area of 101 acres at Langley Oaks Park was of an equal value for the exchange, according to Project Coordinator Brian Williams.

In its environmental assessment, NPS has conducted two years of research, factoring

in forest cover, invasive species, and proximity of nearby agencies, namely the CIA, into their assessment. The Park Service has also worked with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to fulfill requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which mandates that the NPS evaluates potential effects on nearby historical properties in McLean before a swap takes place.

The NPS is still in the public scoping stage of its environmental assessment and will be accepting public comments until Feb. 3. Written comments can be submitted online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/GWMP>

VIEWPOINTS

What do you like or dislike most about the plan?

Gifford Malone

Retired, McLean Resident

Response: "I'm in favor of Alternative 3, in which there is a swap, and the Fairfax Park Authority would build new athletic fields with artificial turf and parking."

Bucky Morris

Executive Director, McLean Youth Lacrosse

"There's two fields there right now and it's all dirt and very hard to use for our organization, so we're really hoping that Alternative 3 goes through."

Vicki Hermann

Resident, Retired

"My primary interest in the land swap business going forward here is the suggestion and proposal for a dog park. It makes sense to me in both organizations getting properties that belong to two bodies who can't use them in their current configuration, and while there's plenty of clamoring in the area for more open space for athletic events for the kids, there's no reason the adults can't take advantage of it too."

Zac Kaye

Physician

"When we moved in, the opening of that part of Georgetown Pike was tree-lined and shaded, it was a gorgeous entry to a scenic highway. When they put Clemjontri [Park] in, they cut it all down and destroyed the area, and we now have to deal with the traffic. With soccer fields, you've got air horns and whistles, and while we love people cheering and having a good time, we feel the noise pollution and lights in the evening will have an impact on our quality of life."

Susan Mosse

Retired, McLean Resident

"For us, I think the most important thing is that the area stays natural and wild, like it is today. We don't want any more development, more traffic, so preferably we would like to have just one owner, either the National Park Service or Fairfax County Park Service, but not both of them dividing the property."

Roberto Mosse

Retired, McLean Resident

"If you look at the map, you'll see that the whole back of Langley Oaks, it's all this land that is not developed. Now if a portion of that goes to the National Parks and a portion stays with Fairfax County, then who does the upkeep? We have in some places already two different owners, but we would be worsening it if we have more."

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lost (adj): 1. unable to find the way. 2. not appreciated or understood. 3. no longer owned or known

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Into the Budget Fray

Bulova highlights accomplishments, challenges in annual address.

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION

Despite the lingering impact of an anemic economy, and the regional ripple effects of federal sequestration, Fairfax County residents will see some concrete signs of progress this year.

That message was delivered by Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova, who cast a mostly positive light on the county's future during a media screening of her televised annual State of the County address on Wednesday, Jan. 15.

In addition to the completion of Phase 1 of the Silver Line in Tysons, motorists can expect to see congestion eased through a number of state-funded transportation projects, including the new I-95 Express Lanes that will tie into the Beltway Express lanes at Edsall Road.

Residents can also look forward to the revitalization and redevelopment of older commercial and industrial areas throughout the county, including the \$250 million transformation of Springfield Mall into the Springfield Town Center in the fall of 2014.

The newly-renovated mall will include the addition of roughly 700,000 square feet of retail, restaurants, a food court and a state-of-the-art movie theater. The 20-foot-tall brown numbers that indicated the mall's six main entrances — a hallmark of the 1970s-era mall — will be replaced with one central grand entranceway.

Bulova also praised the Economic Development Authority and Visit Fairfax for boosting tourism and facilitating the selection of Fairfax County as the host of the 2015 World Police and Fire Games, the world's second largest athletic competition after the summer Olympics. The event is expected to generate more than \$100 million in tourism revenue for the county.

The 30-minute State of the County video, 10 minutes longer than last year's production, highlights many county achievements in the past year — such as the county's low crime rate and a 26 percent reduction since 2007 in the number of people counted as homeless. It also features three of the county's new leaders: newly-elected Sheriff Stacey Kincaid, the county's first female sheriff; Police Chief Edwin Roessler and Karen Garza, the new superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools.

In the video, Garza said one of her top priorities is "to listen and learn what our community expects of its schools."

"One of our big projects this year is that we enlisted the help of a broad-based community committee to develop the Portrait of a Graduate — which will detail what our community expects an FCPS student to know and be to do upon graduating from our system," Garza said.

Garza also addressed the ongoing challenge of funding a school system with a current enrollment of 184,600 students, making FCPS larger than the school systems of eight states and the District of Co-



Sharon Bulova

PHOTO BY VICTORIA ROSS/THE CONNECTION

lumbia.

"As you know, FCPS is facing some challenges as well," Garza said in the video. "We have grown by more than 15,000 students in the last five years and our required expenditures for items like employee benefits have continued to increase. At the same time, revenues have not increased enough to cover expenditures."

In fiscal year 2014, 53 percent of the county's general fund budget was transferred to Fairfax County Public Schools, a sum of roughly \$1.9 billion.

School officials recently unveiled a \$2.5 billion budget,

asking for a 5.7 percent increase, or nearly \$98 million more in county funding. Under the proposed budget, class sizes will increase at all grade levels and about 730 staff positions will be cut.

After the screening, Bulova emphasized that while education continues to be the board's "highest priority" and the community's "greatest investment," there will likely be a significant gap between what school officials are asking for in their budget, and how much the board is prepared to give.

"The schools won't get everything they asked for," Bulova said. "The school board will have to roll up their sleeves and so will supervisors."

When asked how close the board is prepared to get to the 5.7 percent request, Bulova said that a 2 percent increase — or \$33 million — is a more realistic number.

In an effort to bridge that gap, supervisors have made state education funding the county's top legislative priority for this year's General Assembly session.

"This is our education year, our number one ask and priority for legislators is to get the full funding of \$33 million," Bulova said.

ALTHOUGH FAIRFAX COUNTY is not facing the "doomsday budgets" of the mid-1990s, a projected budget shortfall of \$25 million this fiscal year, coupled with the accelerating growth and financial needs of Fairfax County Public Schools will present the Board of Supervisors with choices and challenges.

"Once again, it will not be an easy budget year," Bulova said. "Actions or lack of action at the federal level has impacted commercial and sales tax revenue, making it more difficult for the county to recover from the downturn."

Bulova said the county's advertised budget for fiscal year 2015 will be released for public comment next month. The county will host a number of public hearings, community forums and town meetings to give residents the opportunity to ask questions and make suggestions. In late April, the board officially adopts the budget.

"Every budget tells a story," Bulova said. "We'll look for efficiencies and savings and opportunity for savings, but it won't be easy. The low-hanging fruit has already been picked."

In spite of the challenges, Bulova said she believes the board has consistently been able to strike a balance that has kept taxes affordable while delivering high quality services to residents.

"We remain committed to work with the community to maintain excellence in the face of our challenges," she said.

SPORTS BRIEFS

Langley Hockey Wins Two

The Langley hockey team added four more points with victories against Colonial/N. Stafford on Jan. 6 and Westfield/Heritage on Jan. 10. The Saxons traveled back to Prince William for a Monday afternoon tilt against Colonial where they got production from Charlie Eisner, Owen Westerheim, Sam Lafuria, Will Clemson and Drew Schneider. Both Westerheim and Eisner continued to demonstrate Langley's grinders have elevated their games with goal production and ice time. Ryan Guidi minded the net, allowing a single goal on 17 shots while Langley's offense potted six goals on 29 shots. Referee whistles were busy, flagging Langley for four penalties while only assessing one to the opponent, but Langley penalty killers were up to the task, killing off three of the four while the power play unit scored on their only opportunity. The final score was 6 -1.

In the Friday game, freshman Nickon Yazdani made a strong debut in net, allowing a single goal. The Langley offense continued its dominance with a four bagger from Guidi, hat trick from Clayton and multi goals from Lafuria and Shapiro. Defensemen Will Clemson and Chris Lane both delivered several powerful checks to keep Westfield offense from establishing any chemistry. The game ended with time left on the clock as Langley made the score 11 -1.

The Saxons' next game is against Stone Bridge on Friday, Jan. 24 at Ashburn Icehouse at 9:20 p.m.

McLean Girls' Basketball Suffers First Loss

The McLean girls' basketball team lost to Madison 65-45 on Jan. 17, snapping the Highlanders' 13-game winning streak and dropping their record to 13-1.

McLean will host Langley at 5:45 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 24.

Langley Boys' Basketball Falls to South Lakes

The Langley boys' basketball team lost to South Lakes 58-51 on Jan. 17, dropping the Saxons' record to 5-9.

Langley lost to Madison 45-44 on Jan. 14 and beat Patriot 46-44 on Jan. 16.

The Saxons will travel to face McLean at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 24.

TJ Swim and Dive Beats South Lakes

The TJ boys continued their winning ways (211-94) at the first meet of the new year against South Lakes.

The boys' 200 medley relay — Luke Thorsell (Oak Hill), Joseph Doran (Springfield), Lucas Lin (Fairfax), Miles Oakley (Fairfax) — placed first, and TJ boys' 400 free relay teams took both first — Michael You (Alexandria), Emilio Sison (Annandale), Thorsell, Kyle Alexander (McLean)— and second place —Matthew Szilagyi (Lansdowne), Jared Nirenberg (Springfield), Andrew Seliskar (McLean), Nathan Ouyang (Oak Hill). Seliskar (200 free, 100 fly), Thorsell (200 IM, 100 back), Oakley (50 free, 100 free), and Sison (500 free, 100 breast) were individual double winners as well.

The girls lost (171-144), but Carrie Heilbrun (Fairfax Station) (100 fly) and Sophie Bennett (Arlington) (500 free) finished first, continuing a strong season. Heilbrun and Bennett were also part of the winning girls 200 free relay with Charlie Lertlumprasert, Sophia Moses (Arlington).

In boys' diving, CJ Wilson (Alexandria) finished first, while Callan Monette (Fairfax) took first and Gloria Chen second place for the girls.

Del. Comstock Shares Her Notes on Opening Week

FROM PAGE 3

said at the inaugural, “Everyone, regardless of party, wishes the new governor well.”

Kudos to our General Assembly staff who did a great job moving everyone through the ceremony under extremely volatile weather conditions which they accommodated by providing blue and green rain ponchos that just about everyone used to avoid being soaked in the downpour that greeted us as we were escorted to our seats.

Monday, Jan. 12 – Emphasis on Cyber Security

Monday evening following the Inaugural, the new Governor had the opportunity for his first address to the General Assembly where he provided an overview of his priorities for the coming session.

At my first committee hearing as the newly appointed chairwoman of the House Science and Technology Committee I had the pleasure of welcoming the new Technology Secretary-elect, Karen Jackson, when she testified before my committee and outlined the Governor’s technology priorities. Karen served as the deputy secretary for the past four years and has worked with me on numerous technology issues includ-

ing my telework bills, so it has been a smooth transition to continue working with her in this new leadership position.

At the top of the list for the department is the continued expansion of broadband into communities still lacking access to the Internet, including parts of Loudoun County. Secretary Jackson estimated that three percent of the Commonwealth still lacks access to this basic technology. Another topic Secretary Jackson emphasized was the need for more emphasis on Cyber Security to protect our businesses, consumer privacy, and government data.

Wrapping Up Opening Week – Addressing Human Trafficking

With many retiring members this past session we have other committees headed up by new chairman, including the Transportation Committee on which I serve where Del. Tom Rust, in our neighboring district, now serves as chairman. In the Transportation Committee we also heard from the new Secretary-elect.

In the House Commerce and Labor Committee, where I also serve, we heard from the new Secretary-elect of Commerce and Trade, Maurice A. Jones. During the interview, Secretary Jones reiterated that we



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Del. Barbara Comstock speaking at the Virginia Federation of Republican Women luncheon in Richmond.

need to diversify Virginia jobs and to keep Virginia #1 for jobs.

In the opening days we also had a press conference hosted by the Richmond Justice Initiative on our package of human traffick-

ing bills. I have worked on a bipartisan basis with my colleagues at the General Assembly over the past four years to pass legislation which cracks down on this heinous crime. Human trafficking — modern day slavery — is a hidden crime that is happening across the Commonwealth and even in our own neighborhoods. In order to make an impact on this crime, we must work to identify this crime for what it is, and increase penalties on the demand side of this \$32 billion industry. My bills, HB994 and HB1155 will continue our efforts to combat human trafficking in the Commonwealth.

I always appreciate hearing your concerns and encourage you to contact my office at any time during the session or after. I can be reached during the General Assembly session at 804-698-1034 or Del. Barbara Comstock, P.O. Box 6156, McLean, VA 22106 or you can e-mail me at bcomstock@delegatecomstock.com. Also you can visit my website at www.DelegateComstock.com and sign up for “The Comstock Connection” and keep in touch. If you are in Richmond, you are also welcome to stop by our office at the General Assembly building in Room 407 in the General Assembly building.

Sales Tax Error Artificially Inflates October Revenue

FROM PAGE 3

wrote Alexandria City Manager Rashad Young in a memorandum to City Council members this month.

The concerns are larger than retail sales. One of the potential problems on the horizon is transient occupancy tax revenues. In Alexandria, for example, the hotel occupancy rate fell from 76.1 percent in October 2012 to 72.4 percent in October 2013. In Arlington, hotel occupancy tax revenues fell 15 percent in November compared to the previous year and 18 percent in December compared to the previous year.

“Am I worried? Yes,” acknowledged Arlington Budget Director Richard Stevenson. “But that’s what budget directors do. We worry.”

EXPERTS WHO FOLLOW local government revenues say jurisdictions are worried for two reasons. The first is the lack of continuity on the part of the federal government. When the shutdown was happening, nobody knew how long it would last or when it would end. That led families to cut back their spending habits and cast a wary eye toward the future.

“That, obviously, is scary,” said Frank Shafroth, director of the Center for State and Local Government at George Mason University. “It means for a family that you always have to leave something aside instead of using it at a local restaurant, store or other facility.”

A second reason for worry is that the uncertainty is far from over. The budget agreement reached between Congress and the

president is good through September, leaving open the possibility of yet another battle about bankruptcy and insolvency. That leaves open a sense of doubt for long-term contracts involving everything from bridges and fighter planes to satellite and veterans hospitals.

“With the Federal Highway Trust Fund expected to be insolvent by next year,” said Shafroth, “a key partner in the regional Washington economy is becoming an uncertain one.”

THE NEXT FEW months will detail the extent of the economic damage created by sequester and shutdown. Will the numbers track with expectations? Or will they fall well below the budgets local leaders voted for last spring? That has local governments worried and prepared to make reductions if necessary. Then again, they also don’t want to make spending reduction that are unnecessary and potentially damaging.

“What you don’t want to do is make cuts that if we recover enough we didn’t need to make,” said Laura Triggs, finance director with the city of Alexandria. “But by law, if it continues to be low then yes I have to cut back on expenditures.”

Part of the problem is revenue growth not meeting expectations. Even if local governments see an increase in revenue from sales tax revenue, failure to meet expectations could spell trouble for balancing the books in the current fiscal year. And that means even more headaches for trying to predict the future in fiscal year 2015.

“Normally our sales tax is increasing at a larger extent than it is right now,” said Wilds.

month	Alexandria	Arlington	Fairfax
July, 2012	\$2,095,566.17	\$3,209,203.92	\$13,721,734.05
July, 2013	\$2,131,996.31	\$3,035,747.37	\$13,659,947.01
difference	\$36,430.14	-\$173,456.55	-\$61,787.04
percent change	1.74%	-5.40%	-0.45%
August, 2012	\$2,140,318.83	\$3,319,659.04	\$14,475,843.20
August, 2013	\$2,026,859.07	\$3,037,107.38	\$13,530,731.80
difference	-\$113,459.76	-\$282,551.66	-\$945,111.40
percent change	-5.30%	-8.51%	-6.53%
September, 2012	\$2,183,674.38	\$3,285,824.25	\$13,581,370.46
September, 2013	\$2,103,012.61	\$3,067,027.71	\$13,521,411.87
difference	-\$80,661.77	-\$218,796.54	-\$59,958.59
percent change	-3.69%	-6.66%	-0.44%
October, 2012	\$2,027,158.90	\$3,178,335.39	\$13,614,131.71
October, 2013	\$2,208,159.20	\$3,661,773.43	\$15,728,025.92
difference	\$181,000.30	\$483,438.04	\$2,113,894.21
percent change	8.93%	15.21%	15.53%
November, 2012	\$2,078,264.35	\$3,301,839.75	\$14,234,067.26
November, 2013	\$2,062,527.46	\$3,218,338.10	\$13,908,035.89
difference	-\$15,736.89	-\$83,501.65	-\$326,031.37
percent change	-0.76%	-2.53%	-2.29%

Friends Forever

By KENNETH B. LOURIE



Since it had been more than a few months, today I summoned up the courage to Google my long-time friend and fellow stage IV lung cancer survivor, Suzanne. Suzanne and I had been years out of touch (for no real reason other than initiative and the geographic consideration that she lived in Barnstable, Ma. and I live in Burtonsville, Md.) and recently back in touch – due to our identical cancer diagnoses. I learned that she had succumbed to her disease back in October, 2013. We last had contact electronically back in the summer. She was extremely weak then, she said, too weak to talk, so e-mailing was best. In that e-mail, ultimately her last, she wrote that the most recent chemotherapy drug with which she was infused was no longer effective and that her oncologist had no other drugs left to recommend. Not that she said it in so many words, but at that point her prognosis was grim. She offered that her two boys were with her and from them she would gain great comfort. The news was very unsettling to me and I was afraid that this e-mail might be our last – and so it was.

Suzanne and I were never boyfriend/girlfriend, but from Elementary School through High School we were extremely close and confidants of the highest order (“thick as thieves,” to invoke a quote from the warden in the movie, “Shawshank Redemption” describing the close relationship between Tim Robbins – “Andy Dufresne” and “Red,” – Morgan Freeman). Our friendship was forged during those formative, pre-adolescent years and maintained on – and then off – until back on again a year or so ago, for nearly 50 years. The reason I hadn’t inquired sooner than today was because I was fearful of what I would find out. Typically her e-mails were fairly random and on the occasion when I would e-mail her, she would rarely respond in a timely manner. I tried not to worry about this last silent interval. Today my worst fears were realized.

Just as cancer survivors draw great strength from those of us still living with this terrible disease, so too are we weakened when one of us dies. Rather than feeling fortunate that I am still alive, I feel sadness that Suzanne is not. When one of us dies, we all die – a little bit, or at least, our resolve to persevere dies a little bit. I’ve always said that there is strength in our numbers, numbers that we cannot afford to lose. (Lung Cancer causes approximately 160,000 deaths a year, the leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States.)

Certainly Suzanne’s death affects her family way more than it affects me. However, learning that she has died has given me pause to consider/reconsider how serious my health situation is. It’s ironic that Suzanne and I were friends for so many years and that ultimately we should be diagnosed with the same disease and given a similar prognosis. It seems only fitting that since we started together, we should finish together. I imagine I’ll see her soon enough. For the moment however, I hope it will be in my dreams – not that other place.

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

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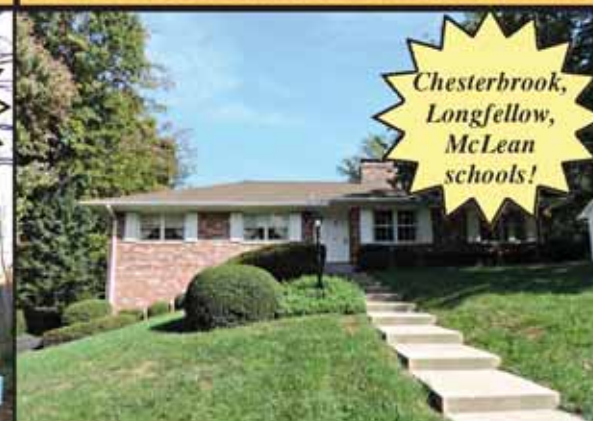


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