

Great Falls CONNECTION

PET CONNECTION

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Sandy Comes Home

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Krista Gatt of Great Falls sent us this photo of Sandy, the family's treasured Cocker Spaniel, 6, and Joey, 9. Sandy came from a broken home in 2008 and has become an important member of the family. She enjoys taking long walks, chasing squirrels and eating (almost) anything.

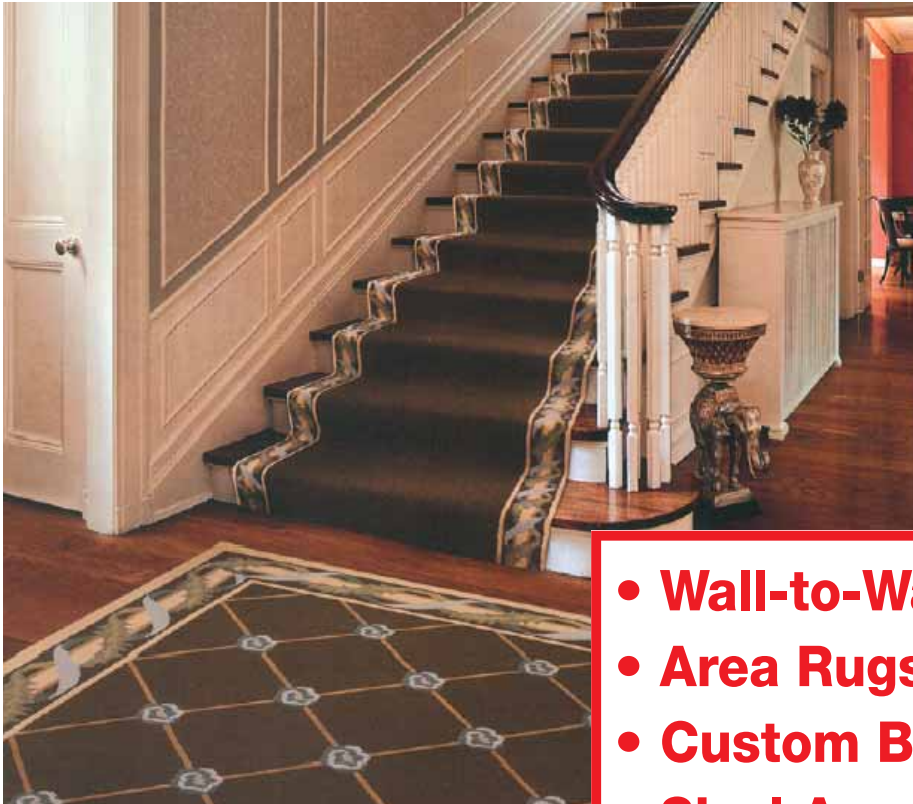
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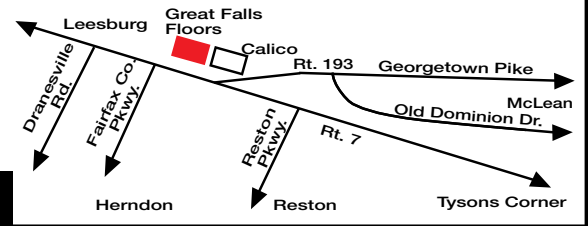
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A view from the parking lot of the Molsters' family stable.



Molster Family Stable Awaits Special Permit Decision

Great Falls residents divided over the Molsters' special permit application to teach horse riding lessons on their property.

BY ETHAN MCLEOD
THE CONNECTION

When Sharon and Charles "Chip" Molster first began teaching horse riding lessons at their home on Blacks Hill Road in 2009, they found their customers loved having an opportunity to learn riding so close to home there in Great Falls.

"[Lessons are] far and few between without having to lease or own a horse, to just come out and learn all aspects of riding in a controlled, small and safe setting," said Sharon, who teaches young riders with her niece at nearby Turner Farm.

But since 2012, Blacks Hill Stables, LLC, has provided all lessons off-site from their property following a zoning complaint filed by a neighbor about the family operating a stable business from home. Presently the property retains all of the equipment for a horseback riding education – two riding rings (one beginner and one intermediate), three pastures, and a barn with stables on their 5.5-acre property – but holds all lessons elsewhere.

FOLLOWING THE COUNTY'S NOTICE of violation, Chip and Sharon voluntarily stopped providing lessons at their home in November 2012. County regulations allow home stables to legally board up to three horses at a time, but not provide lessons without a special permit, according to Chip Molster. "We don't board any horses now, but we have horses for our own use and enjoyment," said Molster, who works as an attorney.

The Molsters have since applied for that special permit, which has cost them more than \$16,000 and counting. County officials working with them have

SEE RIDING, PAGE 6

PHOTOS BY ETHAN MCLEOD/THE CONNECTION

Blacks Hill Stables sits on 5.5 acres and contains three pastures for horses, two riding rings and a full set of stables.



Secrets of 911

Police agencies refuse to release audio from 911 calls, prompting questions about transparency.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

When city officials in Alexandria released the audio of a 911 call in a high-profile murder case, many people interpreted the move as a step forward for transparency in a commonwealth known



MICHAEL LEE POPE/THE CONNECTION

Across Northern Virginia, police agencies routinely deny access to basic information such as audio from 911 calls.

for opaque government. But then reality set in. The release was a mistake. The city attorney's office failed to consult with the police department, which carefully guards its privilege to withhold information from the public.

"It was a clerical error that the 911 call was released," said Crystal Nosal, spokeswoman for the Alexandria Police Department. "We didn't waive the privileges under FOIA, so they are not going to release it again."

Across Virginia, police agencies routinely deny access to basic information and documents available in other states. One key example of the lack of transparency is audio from 911 calls, which are regularly released in most states across America. But not in Virginia, which is one of the reasons why the commonwealth got a failing grade for transparency from the State Integrity Investigation in 2012. Advocates for open government say audio from 911 calls should be available to the public so people know how their government is — or isn't — working on their behalf.

"If anything, it seems the more public input that can be sought on this the better, and the more information the public has the better," said Emily Grannis, a legal fellow at Arlington-based Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. "This is a scary kind of case, and it's a scary kind of case to have open and the more the public can know about it the better the public will be equipped to be able to help police investigate."

POLICE AGENCIES in Virginia don't see it that way. The Virginia Freedom of Information Act gives them sweeping

power to withhold documents and information, a power that is unprecedented in any state in America. And even though part of the law talks about public records being presumed open, Virginia police officials tend to view them as presumed closed because they have the power to prevent the public from having access.

"A lot of the time, what you get with 911 tapes is someone calling in is someone who is afraid of being identified," said Dana Schrad, executive director of the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police. "They want some kind of understanding that they are not going to have their name released."

Advocates for open government disagree with that perspective. They say 911 calls should be available to the public so people know how their government is working on their behalf. Instead of denying access to public records altogether, which is how Alexandria is now handling subsequent requests for the 911 audio in the Ruthanne Lodato murder, those who support public access to government documents say the information could be partially redacted to protect sensitive information. But that's not how the Alexandria city government is handling the situation. In response to a Freedom of Information Act request from Connection Newspapers, the city attorney's office said the record was being "entirely withheld" even though it was already released to the Washington Post.

"They can't discriminate from one media source to the next," said Ginger Stanley, executive director of the Virginia Press Association. "And they can re-

SEE 911, PAGE 5



Langley High School students and teachers participate in the school annual fashion show entitled, 'Enchanted: Revealing the Secret of Style,' at the school on Saturday evening. The show was planned and organized by advanced fashion students at the school.

Fashion Secrets Revealed at Langley High

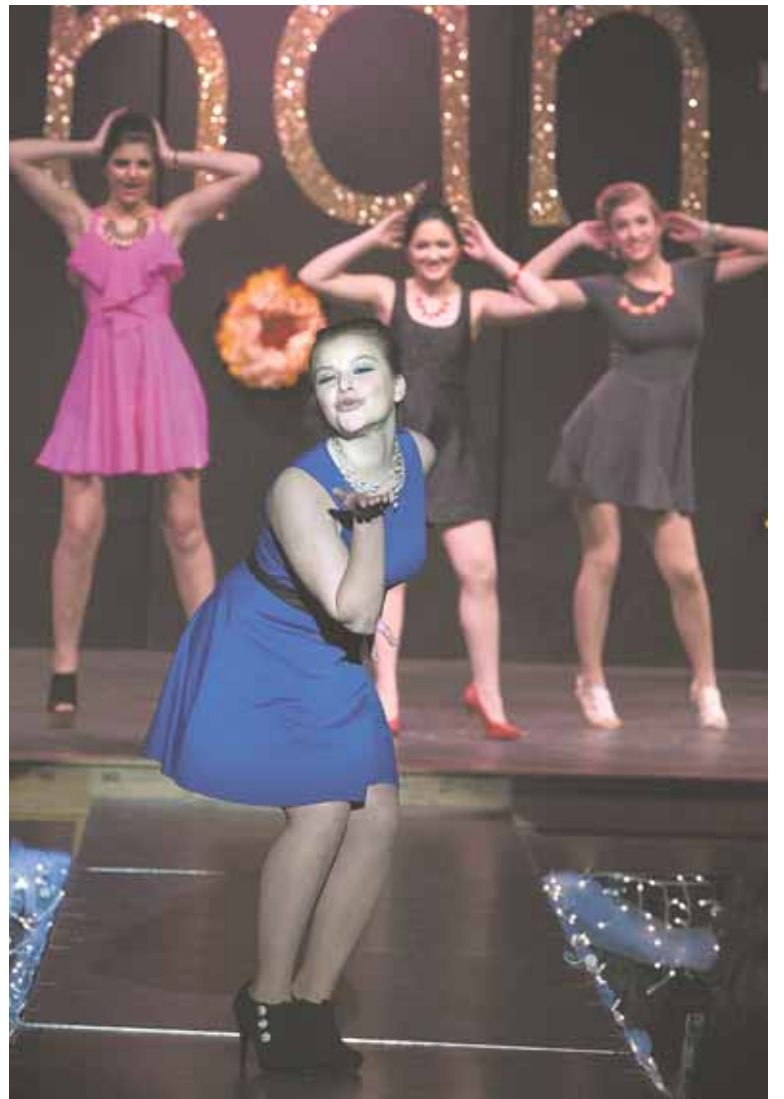
Sahar Ghamary and Chloe Lorenze were co-hosts of the Langley High School 'Enchanted: Revealing the Secret of Style' fashion show.



PHOTOS BY ROBBIE HAMMER/THE CONNECTION



Langley High School students and teachers participate in the school annual fashion show entitled, 'Enchanted: Revealing the Secret of Style,' at the school on Saturday evening. The show was planned and organized by advanced fashion students at the school.



Alisa Bondar shows her style while walking the runway during the 'Enchanted: Revealing the Secret of Style' fashion show at Langley High School on Saturday evening.



Katarina Georgelas shows her style while walking the runway during the 'Enchanted: Revealing the Secret of Style' fashion show at Langley High School on Saturday evening. The fashion show was organized and planned by students of the Advanced Fashion Marketing class.

Meryl Simon, a special education teacher at Langley High School, and her daughter Liliana, walk the runway during the school's fashion show Saturday night.



Historic Cornwell Farm Open to the Public March 8

HBC Realty Group, Keller Williams Realty has announced that Historic Cornwell Farm will be open to the public on Saturday, March 8, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. People wanting to see the home can come on this day and take in the history and architecture all while supporting a worthy local charity. Proceeds from the day go to support LiftMeUp! Therapeutic Riding Program. For more information and questions contact Laura Smith at 571-331-7709, Info@LiftMeUp.org or Karen Briscoe at 703-734-0192, Karen@HBCRealtyGroup.com.

The Cornwell Farm residence in Great Falls has survived as a well-preserved example of Northern Virginia antebellum plantation architecture. The property was accepted into the National Register of Historic Places on April 13, 1977. It is one of the area's most significant residential properties with a Nineteenth Century Manor House, circa 1831. It is scenically important in that it is the major architectural element to be seen along the historic Georgetown Pike, the first road in the state to be designated a Virginia By-Way. The entry features a cedar tree-lined private drive arriving at a pea gravel motor court. The gently rolling land and country vistas are some of the most gorgeous this close to Washington, D.C. The property features a 4-stall barn, fenced and cross-fenced pasture land and run-in shed for horses.

Proceeds from the day support the LiftMeUp! Therapeutic Riding Program. LiftMeUp! is a therapeutic horseback riding program that is dedicated to providing safe and effective instruction to children and adults with a variety of disabilities. The money raised will help maintain and improve the



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Cornwell Farm, a historic property in Great Falls, will be open to the public on Saturday, March 8, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

facilities and grounds to ensure a comfortable and safe place for the riders and horses.

"Good fences make good neighbors, we need good neighbors to help us build good fences to keep our horses safe and out of our neighbors' yards. A section of fence—or even an entire field, can be purchased in honor of a loved one, human or equine and your donations are tax deductible. I am so grateful to Karen Briscoe for organizing this wonderful community event for Lift Me Up!"—said Laura Smith.

For more information about how you can support Lift Me Up! contact Laura Smith 571-331-7709, info@liftmeup.org, or visit www.liftmeup.org.

911 Controversy

FROM PAGE 3

dact parts of the call they think might jeopardize the investigation, but they aren't supposed to redact the whole thing."

IN VIRGINIA police agencies have the ability to withhold a variety of information from the public, including "documents and information, including complaints, court orders, memoranda, notes, diagrams, maps, photographs, correspondence, reports, witness statements, and evidence." Police agencies regularly use this part of the Freedom of Information Act to prevent the public to having free access to information.

"I think they are exercising their discretion too broadly," said Grannis. "This sort of information should be made public by default, particularly in this situation where they have already released the tape and it has already been made public, there really cannot be a justification for withholding it from future requesters."

Alexandria police officials say the justification is that the transparency was a mistake — that they never intended on sharing the audio with the public. Perhaps most importantly, police leaders underscored, they did not ever waive their privileges to withhold information from the public. Across Northern Virginia, government officials say the public's right to know is tempered by the government's desire for secrecy. That means that the presumption is that 911 calls associated with criminal complaints should be secret.

"If there are any kinds of criminal charges tied into a case or if it's an ongoing investigation or if it's ever been part of an investigation, then it's exempt from release under FOIA and can only be released under a court order," said Erikk Daniel, custodian of records for Fairfax County Department of Public Safety. "Once there's a criminal incident associated with a record, then it's exempt from FOIA."

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PHOTOS BY ETHAN McLEOD/THE CONNECTION

Charles “Chip” Molster next to one of two riding rings currently unavailable for lessons on their property.



Sharon Molster stands in front of Blacks Hill Stables’ 5.5-acre facility.

Bringing Riding Business Back Home

FROM PAGE 3

suggested building a cut-through road to nearby Falls Bridge Road to account for any customers and traffic they may bring.

That suggestion has made some community residents weary of a new road that could bring traffic from nearby Georgetown Pike right next to their homes. In addition to the original neighbors who notified the county of the business, others have circulated a petition online voicing their concerns.

“There is no need for a commercial stable deep within a residential neighborhood on Blacks Hill Road,” wrote one neighbor. “All of the commercial stable traffic – feed trucks, riders, horse trailers, etc., – would drive through the heart of our neighborhood every day of the week.”

Responding to these concerns, the Molsters have said that the special permit for which they have applied limits the number of students and classes they can hold at their home. “At most we’re talking five or six cars a day, and that’s for only four to five days a week,” said Sharon Molster. “We’ve agreed with the county that we’ll have no more than twelve students at a time.”

Additionally, Sharon said that they share feed and hay trucks with other horse-owning neighbors that come about twice monthly up the road. Chip has also

talked with the county about paying to plan a wall of evergreen trees at the back of the property in order to respect neighbors’ wishes for privacy.

To help mediate between both sides of the unfolding dispute, the Great Falls Citizens Association has called for a Land Use and Zoning Committee hearing March 10 at The Grange building off of Georgetown Pike.

“One way or the other there are going to be a lot of voices heard,” said Bill Harvey, a GFCA executive board member. “Petitions have been done on many land use issues in the past. They’re a good way to coalesce various interest groups,” said Harvey regarding the opinions circulating online.

After the March 10 meeting, others may follow before GFCA makes a recommendation to the Fairfax County Board of Zoning and Appeals based on what they hear from their members, according to Harvey.

CHIP AND SHARON are optimistic, and say that they have been able to work successfully with both the county and their neighbors in the past. “We’ve changed the parameters of the program along the lines of the county and for what some of the neighbors have requested to change the amount of traffic on the road,” noted Chip. “Hopefully that will help the process to wind up finishing soon.”



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You’ve heard about St. Patrick who drove the snakes out of Ireland, but did you know about St. Patrick, who saved the kittens out of shelters? Now’s your chance to find out! Join Lost Dog & Cat Rescue Foundation for a St. Patrick’s Day celebration, and learn how you can help save lives.

- ♣ Foster Crew Members will answer questions about the most important thing you can do to help.
- ♣ Adoption Center Coordinators will provide information about volunteering at PetSmart centers.
- ♣ Our Transport Coordinator will explain how you can help with little more than some time and a car.



Join us at Lost Dog Café-McLean
 Saturday, March 15, 3-7 p.m. Enjoy snacks & soft drinks while learning how you can help.
 1690 Anderson Road, McLean (near Safeway)
www.lostdogandcatrescue.org



Charlie, delivered by St. Patrick, is available for adoption



PET CONNECTION

Giving Bianca a Second Chance

A Fairfax County Animal Shelter happy ending.

Bianca, a nine-year-old, female, German shepherd mix dog, had been living her life on the end of a chain in a rural part of Virginia. In late January, an unknown stray dog approached Bianca and attacked her. Bianca's owner came outside and in an attempt to stop the attack he hit both dogs with a shovel, striking Bianca over the head and injuring her. Rather than pursue vet care, the owner drove Bianca to the local pound and surrendered her. For the next 36 hours, Bianca sat with no medical care, until a sympathetic staff person called the shelter's rescue partner at the Highland County Humane Society in rural Virginia.

Highland County Humane Society rescued Bianca from the pound and got her emergency medical treatment. She was taken to a foster home to recover and receive further treatment and was transported to the Fairfax County Animal Shelter on Valentine's Day. She was made available for adoption and her story was shared on the shelter's Facebook page, where it caught the attention of a long-time shelter supporter and adopter. The woman's beloved dog Princess (adopted from the shelter in 1999), died on Valentine's Day at the age of 18, on the same day that Bianca's story was posted. She knew that she was meant to help give poor Bianca a second chance.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Bianca sleeping at her new home.

She immediately contacted the shelter and made plans to come and meet Bianca. Bianca went home with her new mom on Feb. 19, and she is doing great.



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OPINION

Budget Process: Get Involved

Chairman gives blueprint for community engagement in Fairfax County budget process.

BY SHARON BULOVA

In Fairfax County, when we adopt the budget, we are investing in the priorities and needs of the community. At the center of this open and transparent process is community engagement. It is critical that we have the community at the table with us when we are considering changes to the budget that the County Executive released for advertisement at our Board Meeting on Feb. 25. Below are some opportunities to learn about the budget, ask questions and make suggestions during the months of March and April. I look forward to hearing from you.

❖ **Ask Fairfax Chat:** The Ask Fairfax Chat is a great opportunity for residents to submit questions about the County's proposed Fiscal 2015 budget directly to County Executive Ed Long. The chat takes place online from 2-3 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 28. To submit questions and join the chat visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/askfairfax.

❖ **Track BOS Budget Questions:** You can view the answers to budget questions asked by the Board of Supervisors throughout the budget process at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb/qa_search.htm.



❖ **Sign up to speak:** All public hearings take place in the Board Auditorium at the Fairfax County Government Center (12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, Virginia 22035) and are open to the public. To sign up to speak at a hearing, please visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosclerk/speaker_bos.htm or call 703-324-3151.

❖ **Important public hearing dates:**
Effective Tax Rate Hearing - Board Auditorium - Govt. Center - 3 p.m., April 8, 2014
Public Hearing - Board Auditorium - Govt. Center - 6 p.m., April 8, 2014
Public Hearing - Board Auditorium - Govt. Center - 3 p.m., April 9, 2014
Public Hearing - Board Auditorium - Govt. Center - 3 p.m., April 10, 2014

BUDGET FORUMS AND TOWN MEETINGS will be hosted by Supervisors and community organizations throughout the county. Below is a list of currently scheduled meetings. Information on additional forums, as well as a current full budget calendar, will be listed in the coming weeks at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb.

❖ **Hunter Mill District Meeting,** Frying Pan Park, 2709 W. Ox Road, Herndon — Sat-

urday, March 1, 9 a.m.

❖ **Dranesville District Budget Meeting,** Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls — Wednesday, March 5, 7 p.m.

❖ **Braddock District Budget Meeting,** Kings Park Library, Braddock Hall, 9000 Burke Lake Rd, Burke — Wednesday, March 12, 7:30 p.m.

❖ **Herndon Town Council,** Herndon Town Council Chambers, 765 Lynn Street, Herndon — Thursday, March 13, 7 p.m.

❖ **Mason District Budget Meeting,** TBD — Tuesday, March 18 - 7 p.m.

❖ **Providence District Budget Meeting,** Dunn Loring Admin Center, 2334 Gallows Road, Dunn Loring — Tuesday, March 18, 7 p.m.

❖ **Dranesville District Budget Meeting,** McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean — Thursday, March 20, 7 p.m.

❖ **Lee District Budget Meeting,** Franconia Government Center, 6121 Franconia Road, Alexandria — Wednesday, March 26, 7:30 p.m.

❖ **Braddock Town Hall,** Robinson Secondary School, 5035 Sideburn Road, Fairfax — Tuesday, April 1, 7:30 p.m.

I hope you will take the time to learn about and participate in this year's budget process. You can contact my office directly by calling 703-324-2321 or emailing chairman@fairfaxcounty.gov.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



PHOTOS BY GENE PHILLIP

Great Falls walkways under snow.

Obstructing Traffic on Walker Road

To the Editor:

The letter from Dudley Losselyong ["More on 'Wrong Direction'," Great Falls Connection, February 12-18, 2014] regarding the "unbelievable" narrowing of Walker Road suggests that the project is attributable to folks who want to "make Great Falls like the place they were moving away

from" i.e. McLean, Reston, and Vienna. I think it's more like West Virginia and the abuse of tax dollars. When McLean, Reston, or Vienna installed sidewalks they shoveled them. The Great Falls Citizens Association did not provide for shoveling the sidewalks they proudly installed. The purpose is to obstruct traffic flow on

Walker Road.

The purpose of street parking on Walker Road is to obstruct pedestrian visibility.

It's the same reason we have routine speed traps set up on Georgetown Pike and the convenient pass-through next to the fire department was eliminated. Obstruction without the approval of

the residents.

Here are some photos of the unshoveled walkways that were installed in the past year. It's 60 degrees and raining today [Feb. 21], and the walkways are still obstructed with snow.

Gene Phillip
Great Falls

Great Falls CONNECTION

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Vendors greet shoppers and explain how they have made or grown their product.

Great Falls Farmers Market Plans for March

BY KATHLEEN MURPHY
MARKET MANAGER

The Farmers' Almanac forecasts a very cold March. We believe. This Saturday has a forecast high of 36 degrees, for example. At a vendors meeting after the market last Saturday, the vendors unanimously agreed to pay the extra fees to rent the Grange for the month of March – pending Fairfax County Park Authority approval. We will not know their answer before this paper goes to press, so please check our website (www.GreatFallsFarmersMarket.ORG), our Facebook page (www.Facebook.com/

GreatFallsCommunityFarmersMarket), or our street signs, which will be updated as soon as we know where we will be.

The Farmers Market has been delighted to offer a warm place for our community to gather on a cold Saturday, enjoy hot apple cider, a warm soup, muffins, empanadas, green shakes, smoothies, raw salads, chocolates, cakes, listen to music, and meet and greet neighbors.

The Farmers Market is accepting applications for the Summer 2014 Market, which begins on Saturday, April 26. If you would like to bring something you grow, cultivate, make, produce, etc., please email Kathleen@greatfallsfarmersmarket.org.

WEEK IN GREAT FALLS

Dr. Mark W. Cannon to Speak at the Great Falls Senior Center March Event

The Great Falls Senior Center (GFSC) has announced Dr. Mark W. Cannon as a guest speaker for the March 4 event. He has lectured at more than 70 institutions in 18 countries.

Cannon has held high positions in each of the three branches of government. Administrative Assistant to the Chief Justice of the United States; Staff Director, Commission on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution 1985-1988, including creation of six-week unit on the Constitution that has been taught to 30 million students; providing liaison to public and private entities and helping plan and implement improvements throughout the American system of justice; provided innovative leadership in corporate, investment, think tank, and academic and government settings, with emphasis on imaginative goals and workable cost effective strategies and implementation.

The March 4 event will be held at St. Catherine of Sienna Catholic Church, 1020 Springvale Road, Great Falls. The program runs 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and includes lunch. A modest contribution is appreciated.

The event is being sponsored by Brightview Assisted Living Great Falls, opening summer 2014.

Reservations are a must. To reserve, email Polly Fitzgerald at pollyfitz1@verizon.net or call 703-759-

4345. Guests who require transportation to attend, call Gene or Maddie McCabe at 703-438-0810.

Loebig Chiropractic & Rehab to Host Blood Drive

Loebig Chiropractic & Rehab and The American Red Cross will be hosting a community blood drive in Great Falls at the office of Dr. Glenn Loebig, 754 Walker Rd, Great Falls on Tuesday, April 15, 1 – 6 p.m.

The need for blood locally remains constant, and donations are needed to offset recent blood shortages. People can donate a pint of blood every 56 days and each donation can help save up to three lives. Blood donations help a variety of patients, including those going through cancer treatments, surgical patients and premature babies, among many others. Donors are encouraged to eat a meal prior to giving blood and drink plenty of water.

Blood donation requirements include a photo ID, a minimum weight of 115 pounds and minimum age of 17. A 16-year old may donate blood with written parental consent and there is no upper age limit for donating blood. Many health conditions and medications do not prevent someone from donating blood. Call 703-757-5817 with any questions.

Serving the Great Falls area for over 16 years, Dr. Glenn Loebig and his staff specialize in difficult and challenging cases of spinal disc injury and trauma, whiplash, scoliosis, and degenerative diseases-and also focuses on treating complex sports and extremity injuries.



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PET CONNECTION

Great Falls People and Pets



My greyhound Skeeter, a 4-year-old rescue, during one of our numerous snowstorms this season.
— MELODEE BOOS, GREAT FALLS



When you have 14 inches of snow everywhere, the only way for our French Briard, Pippa, to get around, is to fly! Her magic pink booties (minus one) help, too.
— DONNA BARNAKO, GREAT FALLS



Toby is a Lab/Catahoula Leopard dog mix. We rescued him at 7 weeks old. About nine months later, my coworker's dog rescued a kitten from drowning. We took her in and it has been a delight to watch the relationship between Toby & Piper grow. And what a coincidence that they match all the way down to their adorable tan eyebrows. We are so thankful for these two peas in a pod and the way they light up our lives.
— HEATHER AND SCOTT MCKISSICK, GREAT FALLS



The Ryan family dog, Maia, age 3.
— JENNIFER RYAN, GREAT FALLS



We all wonder what dogs do when we leave them alone. I found Riley, a West Highland Terrier, with my reading glasses and my magazine in my chair, doing what I like to do! Riley is truly everyone's best friend in the neighborhood and can be seen bouncing around Great Falls greeting everyone.
— PETER AHEARN, GREAT FALLS



Tiger and Jaguar

This is my backyard in the winter with all my friends. When the weather gets cold we have three crows outside. One of them knows how to remind me when it wants food, and then we have squirrels. Our squirrels usually don't hibernate, so I give them food throughout the winter. I also have two cats. Their names are Tiger and Jaguar. I have deer in my backyard too. Sometimes a fox will run through my backyard too!
MIINA ANVELT, 8, GREAT FALLS

Praying Mantis

I have had my pet praying mantises for two weeks now. I found a praying mantis egg sack on my school playground. Me and my friend brought the egg sack into our classroom where they hatched. I adopted 12 praying mantis babies because of the snow and freezing temperatures outside where they could have not survived. I feed them fruit flies every day, and I love watching them grow. My praying mantises are very cute and they get bigger every day. Once spring arrives, I will take them to my organic garden where they can help us to manage the other bugs in the garden.
MIINA ANVELT, 8, GREAT FALLS



Good Neighbors

Marta used watercolors to paint her two cats: Tiger and Jaguar, with their friend, Big Tabby. The neighbor's cat comes to see our cats almost everyday and they love watching each other through the glass door.
MARTA ANVELT, 7, GREAT FALLS

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THE CONNECTION
NEWSPAPERS

PET CONNECTION



PHOTO BY BARBARA AUTREY

Rani Hart, a volunteer at the Fairfax County Animal Shelter, “wrangles” a rabbit during a photo workshop on Feb. 23.

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Hollywood Comes to Fairfax

How to use Hollywood-style portrait techniques to photograph adoptable animals.

BY DEB COBB
THE CONNECTION

Animals at the Fairfax County Animal Shelter were given the celebrity treatment on Feb. 23 when a team from the nonprofit Shelter Art Foundation taught shelter staff and volunteers how to use Hollywood-style portrait techniques to photograph their adoptable animals.

“We believe that every animal is a celebrity. We want to give them the same exposure that we would give a budding star in Hollywood. We do this because it works. Great portraits get actors and actresses noticed and leading roles. We want these animals to get leading roles in new homes,” said Shelter Art Foundation founder Steve Sloop after the Sunday workshop.

“We have conducted photo team workshops at 19 shelters in eight states, enabling these shelters to build the skills necessary to show off their stars. All of the shelters we have worked with have said that the better images make a difference,” said Sloop.

“When I was a kid if you wanted an animal, you went to the shelter. And now, if you want an animal you go online. If the online image isn't beautiful and inviting and something you would want to have at your house, you'll keep clicking until you find it. But when you have that animal that looks at you and grabs your heart, you'll go into the shelter. That may not be the one that you come home with, but we've got you into the shelter so you can find the one you connect with,” said Sloop of the concept that drove him to create the Shelter Art Foundation.

IN THE PAST YEAR, under the leadership of Tawny Hammond, the Fairfax County Animal Shelter has implemented a multi-faceted social media campaign to engage with the community in new ways and to increase adoptions. “A strong photography program coupled with a strategic social media program is paramount to success. With training and attention, we all can do it.”

When the Shelter Art Foundation contacted Hammond about hosting a workshop, she said, “How soon can we do it?” Not only did volunteers from the Fairfax County Animal Shelter participate, but



PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER

A leopard-eared rabbit gets its Hollywood makeover at the Fairfax County Animal Shelter on Feb. 23 during a workshop taught by the nonprofit Shelter Art Foundation. Volunteers at FCAS took this photo after learning professional animal wrangling strategies and studio photography techniques.

representatives from humane societies in the District of Columbia and Montgomery County, Maryland were also present.

The non-profit Shelter Art Foundation was founded in 2010 when Sloop realized that he and his volunteer photo team at the Monterey SPCA had figured out an easy to learn, low cost technique that combined advanced animal wrangling strategies with a basic studio photography setup. He founded the non-profit and started traveling to shelters around the country.

“At first, I'd visit a shelter whenever I was traveling to see family or friends,” says Sloop. In late 2013 he was contacted by Purina to see if support from them would enable the Foundation to expand their program. Once they conduct the workshop, they are able to provide the shelters they visit with the equipment needed to set up the shelter studio at no cost.

THERE ARE CURRENTLY 25 shelters in California, two in Nevada, one in Alabama, one in Louisiana, one in Missouri and one in Virginia scheduled for this spring.

“Our goal is to empower as many shelters and rescue organizations as possible with the training and equipment they need to improve their images,” says Sloop. For more information about the organization, go to their website at www.ShelterArtFoundation.org.

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



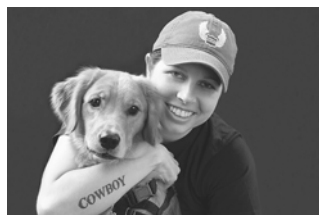
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PET CONNECTION



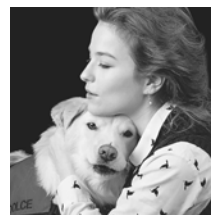
Erin Buckles and Solomon



Sarah Wishart and Darby



Alex Keefover and Kingsley



Natalie Kiddie and Dolce



Adam Campbell and Kenan



Joan Brady with Fred and Hank.

Making Connections

Service dogs and their “handlers” are teamed up through paws4people.

BY JOAN BRADY

I was already one of those embarrassingly crazy dog people, when I first met Kyria and Terry Henry, founders of paws4people.org. But I had no idea how little I truly knew about the bonds possible between animals and their people.

After photographing puppies coming home for the first time, dogs sharing their favorite pastime and pets who are older and/or ill, I really thought I knew all about the animal/people connection.

But nothing prepared me for the emotional bonds that I began to capture for paws4people.org of dogs and the “handlers” who are the paws4people clients.

These were assistance dogs, trained to provide support in mobility, psychiatric service, educational and rehabilitative assistance, and social therapy. The dogs’ training is done largely in prisons by inmate trainers.

Children and adolescents, veterans and active-duty service members who are accepted into the program, meet with trainers and dogs at the prisons (called a “bump”), in hopes that there will be a match between each of them and a dog. When a match is found, the dog is trained specifically to the needs of his/her new “handler.”

If you have ever tried to photograph your pet, you know it requires patience, a quick finger on the shutter and fast equipment. Capturing the relationship between assistance dogs and their handlers, is something altogether different.

It’s about capturing the intimacy of two beings who live largely for each other. As a photographer, that means creating the right environment, without intruding too much on the moment.

Here are a few of the pairs I have photographed, and a little bit about each.

SONNY MORROW, of Alexandria, stepped on a land mine while serving in Vietnam. As he has aged, the injuries he sustained

have continued to limit his activities and those of his wife, Peggy.

When Sonny went to West Virginia for his “bump” at FCC Hazelton, four years ago, he didn’t know what to expect. Sonny was introduced to two dogs, one by one. Each dog took one look at him and walked the other way. Sonny had heard that you don’t pick the dog, the dog picks you. And he wasn’t getting picked.

Another dog, Jake, a black lab, was not felt to be ready to meet any of the “clients.” Maybe it was the way he looked at

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE

Sonny from across the room, maybe it was just a gut feeling, but it was decided that Jake should meet Sonny. Within seconds, Jake was upside down in Sonny’s lap and it was clear they were meant for each other.

Sonny gives Jennifer, Jake’s lead trainer, a great deal of credit for thoughtfully questioning him that day on what he was going to need from his assistance dog and then making sure that Jake had the training that would allow him to meet his specific needs. They remain close friends to this day.

Sonny can’t imagine his life without Jake. Jake is not only a caring constant companion, but his practical skills are critical to Sonny’s well being. Jake is able to call 911 if Sonny gets into trouble and helps Sonny with his mobility and stability. Sonny describes Jake, with great pride, as being able to do absolutely anything.

DAWSON HAS BEEN WITH RACHAEL WESSELL about a year now. He helps her with daily tasks like picking up dropped

items, alerting her when someone is approaching her wheelchair from behind, helping her to balance when she needs to right herself, carrying bags, getting out her wallet or cell phone, getting help in an

emergency. He is able to remove her socks and coat and will even bring her a hot pizza without scarfing it down himself. He lives for Mondays when Rachael rides at Lift Me Up therapeutic riding in Great Falls.

FOR ERIN BUCKLES, born a conjoined twin and separated as an infant from her sister Jade, having Solomon meant that she would no longer be the girl in the wheelchair at school in Northern Virginia. She would be the girl with the dog. And, she



Rachael Wessell and Dawson — who can deliver an entire pizza and loves his time at Lift Me Up in Great Falls while Rachael is riding.

PHOTOS BY JOAN BRADY

She was thankful to have Darby by her side.

GETTING TOGETHER with friends is challenging for Josh Gregor of West Virginia. Because of his medical needs, he is fed and/or receives medications through a tube throughout the day. He is sensitive to other kids observing the intimate details of his daily life and he always has to have a nurse or his mom nearby.

Mason, his assistance dog, has practical, life saving responsibilities like alerting adults when Josh’s tube gets

wouldn’t have to wait for someone to pick up a dropped pencil or bring her shoes to her.

ADAM CAMPBELL says he felt connected to Kenan as soon as they met at Lakin Correctional Center in West Virginia. “[it was] the way he looked at me, while he leaned into me, while I pet him. It was a moment I will never forget.”

SARAH WISHART, a veteran, and Darby were matched last July and both are still in training as of the writing of this column. They train together and Darby continues her training separately until they are both ready for Darby to go home with Sarah.

This training time is hard on Sarah, especially leaving Darby behind when she heads home. She can’t wait for Darby to come home with her. “She’s going to get me back out and helping my community again.”

At the paws4people.org annual reunion in October, Sarah struggled with her fear of crowds, related to her PTSD. Not only was she facing the crowded reunion, but that weekend marked the first anniversary of the death of one of her fellow soldiers.

He had been a true leader who was lost to an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan. To Sarah, he will always be known by his call sign, “Cowboy.” His memory and the knowledge of what he would want for her helps to propel her forward.

twisted, but what Josh cares most about is that now he has someone to play with all of the time.

NATALIE KIDDIE AND DOLCE, a psychiatric service dog, work as co-therapists at North Spring Behavioral Healthcare in Leesburg helping youths and adolescents with mental health impairments. Often it is Dolce with whom they feel comfortable sharing their thoughts.

ALEX KEEFOVER AND KINGSLEY met when Alex was 16. This year, they started college. Like so many of the paws4people clients, Kingsley is Alex’s everything, “He’s there for me. If it’s picking up stuff, taking my coat off, stuff like that, and also the emotional support. If I’m having a bad day or worried about school, I just have to look at him and I’m laughing.”

Alex remembers well how he felt the day he met Kingsley for the first time, “When we got [to the prison] I was so nervous. ... then when I met the dogs, pure joy.”

Alex felt the connection to Kingsley the minute they met. He says that Kingsley’s only limitation is that he cannot type for him as Alex has much to say, but has speaking and typing difficulties.

Joan Brady is a professional photographer; mentor and advocate for current and former foster children; volunteer with paws4people, Fairfax Families4Kids, and others; and a resident of Great Falls. Reach her by email at joan@joanbradyphotography.com.

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PHOTOS BY ETHAN MCLEOD/THE CONNECTION

Young Musicians Dazzle at the Alden Theater

The “Young Soloists Recital” at the Alden Theater featured four talented pianists and one violinist.

BY ETHAN MCLEOD
THE CONNECTION

Five young musicians spanning an age range of seven years were given the chance to shine in front of a large crowd at the Alden Theater on Sunday, Feb. 23. While the audience heard lovely renditions of Chopin and Beethoven’s works, the performers were able to relax a bit performing in a non-competition setting.

“Usually in competitions you perform for judges, but it’s very rare that you actually get to play for people who have just come here to listen to your music,” said 13-year old Kevin Wang, a student at Rachel Carson Middle School. Wang was joined by fellow pianists Victor Pan, 10, Evan Hu, 11, and Adam Heins, 17, as well as violinist Shankar Balasubramanian, 16.

The “Young Soloists Recital” on Sunday, Feb. 23 was one of several youth performances that take place at the Alden Theatre each year. Anita Lamkin, a former Fairfax County music librarian, has been organizing the Concerts at the Alden series since 1973. The Young Soloists program began after her first year, when she realized that there are a large number of younger musicians who had to compete with more experienced adults from around the area.

“It’s the only concert series that we know of that offers an opportunity like this,” said Lamkin, now retired. “It gives them a chance to do a little recital like a concert artist, with a first-class piano in a concert hall setting. It’s a great opportunity for them, plus it’s free for the public.”

Though each young performer has won numerous state and national awards, they were able to take a break from competing to play in front of the Sunday afternoon crowd. Parents and teachers alike agreed



Anita Lamkin, a sponsor for Concerts at the Alden, and Robert Ames Alden, the man for whom the theater was named, stand in front of Alden’s hanging picture in the lobby before the concert.

that the concerts are hugely beneficial due to the low-stress setting.

“It’s great that Alden is providing these kids the exposure in a formal theater setting where they can perform their hard work,” said June Zheng, Evan Hu’s mother. Like Zheng, Marjory Lee, Hu’s teacher, couldn’t have been prouder following Sunday’s performance. Lee has worked with Hu for over five years and has watched his talents develop.

“They come and are inspired as children by these concerts. Here they can really express themselves instead of worrying about their scores,” said Lee.

The Concerts at the Alden series is provided thanks to the generous support of the Music Friends of the Fairfax County Public Library. The next performance on March 9 at 3 p.m. will feature violinist James Stern and pianist Audrey Andrist, better known as the Stern/Andrist Duo.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Hearing on the McLean Community Center’s FY 2016 Programs
Wednesday, March 26, at 7:30 p.m.

The Governing Board of the McLean Community Center is **seeking input from residents** of Dranesville Small District 1A at its Public Hearing on Programs for FY 2016, which runs July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016.

The Board is interested in hearing residents’ ideas for classes, community events, theatre programs, exhibits, tours and youth and teen activities.

If you would like to speak at the hearing, call the Center to have your name placed on the speakers’ list. You also may submit comments in writing to:
george.sachs@fairfaxcounty.gov

The McLean Community Center
1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean VA 22101
703-790-0123/TTY: 711
www.mcleancenter.org

CALENDAR

Send announcements to greatfalls@connectionnewspapers.com. Deadline is Friday for the following week's paper. Photos/artwork encouraged.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 26- FRIDAY/FEB. 28

"Here and There: Paintings of the Brogue and Beyond." Paintings on exhibit by artist Jill Banks. Katie's Coffee at the Old Brogue Irish Pub, 760C Walker Road, Great Falls. www.JillBanks.com.

Fine Arts Photography Exhibition. Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Great Falls artist Richard Suib depicts many scenes from Venice, Florence, Slovenia, and Russia.

SATURDAY/MARCH 1

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

Concerts at the Alden. 3 p.m. The McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Avenue, McLean. A classical music concert cosponsored by the Music Friends of the Fairfax County Public Library and The Alden.

SUNDAY/MARCH 2

Jazz Sunday. Special music will be offered at both the 9:00 and 11:15 morning services including Come Sunday by Duke Ellington and the spiritual, Ain-a that Good News. All are welcome for jazz and worship. St. John's Church, 6715 Georgetown Pike, one mile east of the beltway at Exit 44. For more information, please call 703-356-4902, or visit www.stjohnsmclean.org.

Free Band Concert. 7 p.m. Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street SE, Vienna. Admission is free and seating is available on a first-come-first-serve basis. Space is limited. Selections include music from famous Broadway musicals including George Gershwin's Porgy and Bess, Andrew Lloyd Webber's Phantom of the Opera, John Kander's Chicago and Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg's Wizard of Oz. For more information, call 703-255-6360 or visit www.viennacommunityband.org.

TUESDAY/MARCH 4

Great Falls United Methodist Church Annual Shrove Pancake & Sausage Dinner. 5:30-7:30 p.m. 10100 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Free- no reservations necessary. Donations accepted for Society of St. Andrew's food gleaning programs.

Northern Virginia Bead Society Program Monthly Meeting. 7 p.m. Their purpose is to encourage members of the community to appreciate and participate in the visual arts through beads. They endeavor to provide a network for education opportunities and the exchange of ideas about beads and techniques in beading. www.nvbs.org.

Great Falls Senior Center Presents Distinguished Scholar Mark W. Cannon. 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. St. Catherine of Sienna Catholic Church, 1020 Springvale Road, Great Falls. Cannon has lectured at more than 70 institutions in 18 countries. He has held high positions in each of the three branches of government.

Hunger Relief Pancake Dinner. 5-7 p.m. The Hunger Church, Charles Wesley United Methodist Church, 6817 Dean Drive, McLean. Annual free pancake dinner with monetary donations to directly benefit the Society of St. Andrew (Sosa), a national nonprofit hunger-relief



PHOTO BY TERESA CASTRACANE/COURTESY OF 1ST STAGE

From left: Brian Keith MacDonald as Cosme McMoon and Lee Mikeska Gardner as Florence Foster Jenkins in 'Souvenir: A Fantasia on the life of Florence Foster Jenkins' at 1st Stage Now playing Friday, Saturday, Sunday through March 2.

FRIDAY/MARCH 7

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington's (BGGW) Fairfax County Region Inaugural Casino Night Fundraiser. 6:30-11:30 p.m. The Ritz-Carlton, 1700 Tysons Blvd, McLean.

The Fairfax Regional Board will bring a bit of friendly Vegas-like fun to support the programming for the region's two Clubs. Unlike the money and chips found in real casinos, Casino Night guests will receive funny money and a bidder number. They will use their winnings from casino-favorites such as Black Jack, Texas Hold 'Em, and Craps to bid on fabulous raffle prizes. The more chips players accumulate at the gaming tables the better their chances to win great raffle prizes at end of evening

The Fairfax Region of BGGW provides a safe haven for more than 580 young people between the ages of 5 and 18 years old at two sites: Culmore Character Club and Murrigate Village Club. The clubs serve poor children, providing support for homework and academic success, life skills training, character building and fun. Ninety-Two percent of the Clubs' members qualify for free lunch.

Casino Night will not only be a night of fun and excitement, it will be a thrilling opportunity to support youth in the Fairfax community who need us most. The evening includes Ritz-Carlton dinner buffet, open bar, casino games, raffle, dancing, DJ and more, for \$95 a person or \$175 per couple. Special overnight room rate of \$119 available.

Register now. To purchase tickets for Casio Night & and more information about Fairfax Region of Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington visit: www.bgcgw.org/fairfax/casino-night/

ministry that rescues 30-35 million pounds of fresh, nutritious, excess produce each year that would otherwise go to waste. Kids will enjoy crafts and decorating their pancakes. Sponsored by the United Methodist Men of The Hunger Church. <http://www.TheHungerChurch.org>

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 5

Ash Wednesday Services at St. John's Episcopal Church. 7-11 a.m. St. John's Episcopal Church, 6715 Georgetown Pike, McLean.

SATURDAY/MARCH 8

Mardi Gras Party. 8 p.m. Vienna's American Legion Post 180, 330 Center St, N, Vienna. Tickets \$25 before February 23, \$25 after. Contact 703-938-9535 or www.Legion180.net.

SUNDAY/MARCH 9

The Stern/Andrist Duo Concert. 3 p.m. Alden Theatre of McLean, 1234 Ingleside Avenue, McLean. This free concert will feature violinist James Stern of the University of Maryland and multi-talented pianist Audrey Andrist in a program that includes a sonata by Janacek, Four Pieces by Suk, Theme and Variations by Messiaen, and the Sonata in C minor by Beethoven.

MONDAY/MARCH 10

Lunch 'N Life. 12 p.m. Emmanual

Lutheran Church, 2589 Chain Bridge Road, Vienna. Join the Shepherd's Center of Oakton-Vienna (SCOV) for their first in 2014 schedule of Lunch n' Life events. It includes lunch and dessert followed by Ric Edelman, who appears on stage frequently, talking to thousands of people every year, and is widely acknowledged as an entertaining and informative speaker. Visit <http://scov.org/calendar.htm> or call the office at 703-281-0538. \$10 per person. Reservation and prepayment required by Wednesday, March 5.

SUNDAY/MARCH 30

Capitol Steps. 4 p.m. James Madison High School, 2500 James Madison Drive, Vienna. The quick witted multi-faceted congressional staffers, will be performing their popular fast-paced musical political satire. Proceeds to benefit the Class of 2014 All-Night (Drug Free, Alcohol Free) Grad Party. To pre-order ticket(s), include your name, telephone, address & e-mail and mail your \$25 (per ticket) check payable to: JMHS All-Night Grad 2500 James Madison Drive Vienna, VA, 22181 or purchase now online <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/569720> or (if available) on the night of the performance will be \$30. Contact us for additional info here: jmhscapsteps@gmail.com. Special: due to popular demand, there is a Senior Discount that we are offering to those who are 65 and over, only \$23.



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Here's What's Happening at MCC



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Sunday, March 2, 2 p.m.
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Wednesday, March 5, 1 p.m.
Free admission

"The Intersection of Climate Change & Art"

Thursday, March 6, 7:30 p.m.
Free Admission

Studio Rep "Code 20: Proceed to Improv"

Thursday, March 13, 7-9 p.m.
Old Firehouse Teen Center
Free admission

Christopher K. Morgan & Artists

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SPORTS

PHOTOS BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

Jacqueline Green and the McLean gymnastics team finished runner-up at the 6A North region meet on Feb. 18 at Lake Braddock Secondary School.



McLean Gymnastics Finishes Region, State Runner-Up

After some early struggles, the McLean gymnastics team managed to finish in the top two at the 6A North region meet on Feb. 18 at Lake Braddock Secondary School and earn a trip to states.

The Highlanders were in a three-team race with Washington-Lee and T.C. Williams for the top two spots. McLean finished runner-up for the third straight year, finishing less than a half-point behind three-time champion W-L.

"I had no idea what the scores were going to be," McLean head

coach Courtney Lesson said after the meet. "I was a little nervous that we weren't quite there, but I wasn't sure."

McLean overcame a rough start to finish with a score of 140.077. W-L totaled 140.449. T.C. Williams finished third with a score of 138.459.

"They moved on from one event to the next," Lesson said of the Highlanders, "moving forward with all their routines."

What were Lesson's expectations for states?

"I just want the girls to have fun," she said, "and go in and hit

all their routines."

The Highlanders did more than have fun during the state meet Feb. 21-22 at Salem High School in Virginia Beach. McLean finished 6A state runner-up, posting a score of 143.725. Cox won the state championship with a score of 144.95. Washington-Lee (143.125) took third, and Stafford (142.875) finished fourth.

McLean's Nathalie Thomas tied with Marshall's Morgan Stahl for fifth on beam with a score of 9.6. Thomas also tied with Westfield's Katie Freix for sixth on floor.

Hayfield's Molly Overstreet won



McLean's Lizzy Brown-Kaiser performs on beam during the 6A North region meet on Feb. 18 at Lake Braddock Secondary School.

a state title on bars with a score of 9.925. Stuart's Eleanor Freed won the vault title with a score of 9.9.

At regionals, Thomas placed third on beam (9.317) and floor (9.35). Lizzy Brown-Kaiser finished sixth on vault (9.525) and

eighth on beam (8.817). Jacqueline Green finished seventh on beam (8.9).

The top five individuals in each event qualified for states.

— JON ROETMAN

SPORTS ROUNDUPS

South Lakes Indoor Track Qualifies 20 for States

Victories in the boys' 500 meters, long jump and 4x400 meter relay highlighted the South Lakes indoor track team's performance at the 6A North Regional Championship, Wednesday, Feb. 19 at the Prince George's Sportsplex in Landover, Md.

SLHS will be represented by 20 athletes at the 6A State Indoor Championships Feb. 27-March 1 in Hampton.

Senior Daniel Johnsen won the 500 meters in 1:06.08. He also anchored the winning 4x400 relay team (3:28.16) of seniors Michael Kerr, Luis Rivas and junior Sam Arpee. Johnsen also finished fourth in the 300 meters with a 36.87.

The top six finishers in each of the regional events advance to the state track meet.



PHOTO BY GABRIELLE LOZAMA

South Lakes' Khayri Denny, left, and Daniel Johnsen compete at the 6A North regional indoor track meet.

Khayri Denny jumped 22-5 1/4 to win the regional title in the long jump. The senior also finished fifth in the 55 meters (6.65), sixth in the 300 meters (37.22) and 15th in the triple jump (39-3 1/2). Denny teamed

with seniors Ben O'Connor, Marcus Harrell and Anthony Mayo for a fourth place finish in the 4x200 (1:34.72). Junior Delaney Wickman was second in the 500 meters (1:16.67) while sophomore Golden Kumi-Darfour finished fifth (1:17.56). Freshman Devyn Jones ran a 8.90 in the 55-meter hurdles for fifth place and a trip to states and junior Comfort Reed placed fourth in the triple jump with a leap of 36-2. Reed was also 12th in the long jump (16-2).

Other top-six performances at the regional meet include: girls' 4x400 relay team of juniors Ozioma Chinaka, Maya Rodriguez, Kumi-Darfour and Jones ran a 4:10.20 for sixth place, and senior Abby Reinhold, juniors Erin Bidwell

and Gabrielle Acosta and sophomore Monica Lannen placing sixth in the girls 4x800 (10:03.14).

McLean Boys', Girls' Basketball Teams Lose at Regionals

The McLean boys' basketball team lost to Lake Braddock 73-44 on Monday night during the opening round of the 6A North region tournament.

McLean, the No. 4 seed from Conference 6, finished the season with an 8-17 record, including a 64-57 victory over Lake Braddock on Dec. 26.

The McLean girls' basketball team lost to T.C. Williams 45-44 on Monday. The Highlanders, the No. 3 seed from Conference 6, finished the season with a 20-5 record. McLean started the season by winning its first 13 games and 19 of its first 20.

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High Five



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I made it. It's five years after receiving a terminal diagnosis on February 27, 2009 from my oncologist: stage IV non-small cell lung cancer, accompanied by a "13-month to two-year" prognosis. Let's be honest, medical professionals don't toss around the word "terminal" because you're going to be treated at an airport. Presumably, they know their facts and figures as well as the patient's present condition, confirmed by a variety of diagnostic results from X-Rays, CT Scans, P.E.T. Scans, lab work and of course the ever-popular biopsy, so their diagnosis/prognosis is a bit more than an educated guess. Nevertheless, there are exceptions to every rule and until proven otherwise, I was not about to succumb to their statistics. Still, based on the best medical knowledge available at the time, this patient (yours truly) was given a limited life expectancy and encouraged to take the vacation I had always dreamed of – for obvious you're-life-is-now-shorter-than-you-ever-imagined-type reasons, and yet, five years hence, here I am.

I have to admit, surviving, at least from my perspective, is indeed all it's cracked up to be. Aside from beating the alternatives, it has been, for me, empowering in a way. Not that I think I wrote the book on what one need do to fend off the ravages of this insidious disease – though I have made my share of changes and accommodations, but I have persevered. And for those closest to me who knew me when (pre-diagnosis), I have switched and fought – I have occasionally looked back. And even though I never was a smoker and rarely exposed to second-hand smoke, I may very well have been a victim of some of my own circumstances. Although I didn't/don't drink much or consume drugs to any extreme degree, my eating habits may have contributed to a weakened immune system which in some way kick-started the cancer cells in my body (which we all have, by the way); and if you believe any of the like-minded literature coming out of Johns Hopkins and other respected medical institutions: we all may very well be what we eat – or don't eat. And apparently, there may be consequences – both good and unfortunately, bad.

For the past nearly five years (beginning in June, 2009), I have chronicled my life as a cancer patient. Every week, save for a few non-cancer columns as we call them, I have written about cancer and the range of emotions I've experienced. I don't think I've not shared one emotion with you that I've felt. Not that it was ever important that it was me doing the talking, because it wasn't/isn't, it's simply that I had a forum/space and the support of my publisher and editor to unburden myself in this very public way. And since writing with such honesty came easy to me (I had been writing non-cancer columns in the Connection since December 1999), having such a juicy and compelling subject on which to write was not particularly challenging to me. Moreover, given the incredibly appreciative and super-positive feedback I have received from readers over the years, I have felt encouraged to continue.

Some weeks however, especially after chemotherapy, the words don't exactly flow, but for now, life is going on. I have another CT Scan on the day this column publishes, 2/26/2014. Within a day or two, my oncologist will e-mail the results to me. Within a day or two after that, I will likely write my next column. I hope the news is good. It might not be though. When you've so far outlived your original prognosis as I have, it's hard not to think you're borrowing time – and as most of us will readily admit, pay-backs are hell.

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

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-William Van Horne

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THURSDAY/FEB. 27

American Red Cross Blood Drive. 8 a.m.- 1:30 p.m. Federal Highway Administration, 6300 Georgetown Pike, McLean.

TUESDAY/MARCH 4

Lyme Disease: A Biological Medicine Approach. 5:30 p.m. Tysons Corner Marriott, 8028 Leesburg Pike, Vienna. Dr Rau's approach integrates the medical treatment modalities with dental and pharmacy practices used to successfully treat many chronic, debilitating conditions.

Cost \$125 per person. For \$50 off, enter promo code 50OFFLYME (That's a zero followed by the letter O.) We have some partial scholarships available. To register, visit: <http://www.marioninstitute.org/events/lyme-disease-biological-medicine-approach>

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 5

Vienna Photographic Society. 7:30 p.m. Oakton Elementary School, 3000 Chain Bridge Rd., Oakton. Frank Van Riper will discuss photography while traveling in a foreign country, which offers challenges unlike those encountered here.

There can be the obstacle of language as well as differences in customs, logistics, and equipment. www.vpsva.org

TUESDAY/MARCH 11

STEM Education. 7 p.m. the Patrick Henry Library, 101 Maple Avenue East, Vienna. The Vienna branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) will host a discussion about STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education. Call 703-321-7499 for more information.

FAITH NOTES

Faith Notes are for announcements and events in the faith community. Send to greatfalls@connectionnewspapers.com. Deadline is Friday.

Great Falls United Methodist Church is offering "24 Hours That Changed the World," about the last 24 hours of Jesus' life - before the resurrection. The study, written by Adam Hamilton, will be offered during the Sunday school hour (9 to 9:45 a.m.) beginning on Sunday, March 9 through Sunday, April 27 at Great Falls United Methodist Church, 10100 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Youth and adults are welcome to participate. The study will also be offered on Wednesday mornings from 10 to 11 a.m. beginning Ash Wednesday, March 5 through Wednesday, April 16. On Sunday morning, the nursery will be staffed for childcare needs.

If you have questions, contact Bertina at youth@greatfallsumc.org or Pastor Denise at atpastordenise@greatfallsumc.org.

The Jewish Social Services Agency (JSSA) offers a wide variety of support groups for those with emotional, social, and physical challenges. www.jssa.org/growth-learning.

HAVEN of Northern Virginia offers a variety of free bereavement support groups, meeting on a weekly basis. 703-941-7000 or www.havenofnova.org.

McLean Bible Church Fitness Class at Body & Soul Fitness. Gain balance, energy and strength at 9:45 a.m. Mondays and Fridays. Free childcare for registered students. bodyandsoul@mcleanbible.org.

St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church, 1830 Kirby Road in McLean, holds a third Sunday service every month at 10:15 a.m. which allows children to play active roles in the music and as greeters and ushers. Traditional services are every Sunday at 8:15 and 10:15 a.m.

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