



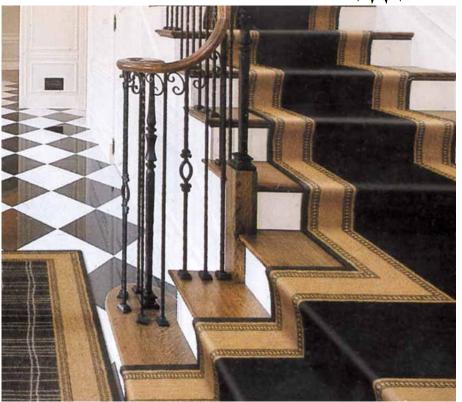




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Blizzard of Spending

Polar vortex sends financial chill through local governments.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE The Connection

he unusually hard winter has created a blizzard of spending for local governments across Northern Virginia — burst ing through budgeted amounts for snow removal and treating roads, leaving a lasting legacy of potholes that will be plaguing roads this spring. Officials at the Virginia Department of Transportation say they spent \$175 million on snow removal this winter, more than twice as much than they were planning to spend. And that's just for starters.

"This is going to be a much worse pothole season than in years past," said Jennifer McCord, spokeswoman for VDOT. "We've been filling them, basically, since the winter started."

Alexandria spent \$1.6 million on snow control. That's more than twice the amount city officials set aside in the budget, which was \$836,000. And Arlington officials say they've already spent more than \$2 million even though they had budgeted only \$1.1 million. Local governments across the region will be forced to dip into their contingency funds to deal with the record amounts of snow dumped on Northern Virginia this year.

"If they don't deal with these potholes quickly, the cost will become much greater," said Frank Shafroth, director of the Center for State and Local Government Leadership. "Waiting longer means they have to dig up the road bed, which is way more expensive than filling a pothole."

POTHOLES FORM when roads experience moisture and then a rapid freeze and thaw. Moisture gets into cracks in the road, which undermines the road surface. Then traffic pummels the already undermined road surface over and over until the cracks become larger and larger. Over time the cracks start to peel away as pieces of asphalt fly away. When that happens over and over, the cracks start to grow larger and larger.

"That creates a minor depression that can sometimes grow into something much larger that we affectionately call a pothole," said Yon Lambert, deputy director for operations of the Alexandria Department of Transportation and Environmental Services.

Alexandria currently has 574 requests since the beginning of January to March 21, a 552 percent increase over last year, which was 88 requests for service. About 42 of those are still being investigated to see what kind of remedy would be appropriate. That's part of a regional effort to address potholes throughout Northern Virginia, a region that has been hit with a disproportionate amount of precipitation and freezing weather this year. All local governments are trying to figure out how much this year's winter will cost them as the next budget season approaches.

"All invoices for snow-related costs for the last event have not been paid. Some not received yet," said Arlington budget director Richard Stephenson. "In addition, the cost of pot hole repairs will not be known for some time."

THE COSTS of the polar vortex are not easy to grasp, partially because it's difficult to know what the final bill will be and partially because nobody knows how much the damage will be inflicted. Anecdotal evidence is overwhelming. Drivers know that their roads are deteriorating rapidly. Alexandria and Arlington have dominion over their own streets, although the roads of Fairfax County are maintained by officials at the Virginia Department of Transportation, who are scrambling to meet all the requests they have been confronted with since the polar vortex swept

"Our roads are in pretty sorry shape," said Del. Scott Surovell (D-44). "The snow removal expense has now begun to eat into the repaving expense for this year, and so VDOT is having to look at deferring paving projects that were planned for 2014 because of the amount of money that it has to spend on snow expenses."

Budget officials across Northern Virginia will not know the final expense of the polar vortex for some time. That's because all the invoices have not yet been received by local governments. Those expenses will probably become more digestible for budget officials during the mid-year review or the third-quarter review, long after the snow has melted and the spring flowers have wilted. Until that time, government leaders will be working overtime to fix the damage of the polar vortex. One day last week, for example, Alexandria had four crews out repairing 375 potholes using six tons of hot-mix asphalt.

"We can't do a really active and intense period of pothole repairs when temperatures are very cold," said Lambert. "We've had more than 30 inches of snow this year whereas we had less than two inches last year, and that combined with the very cold temperatures has a very big impact on our roads."



PHOTO BY REENA SINGH/

Katharine Jiang created the CLIPUS Foundation to help underprivileged children receive school supplies.

Local Student Starts Foundation

Katharine Jiang's contribution grants 100 D.C.-area students notebook-laden backpacks.

By Reena Singh The Connection

ew high school students can say they have created a foundation. Sixteen-year-old Katharine Jiang of Great Falls is one of those few.

In the pursuit to make a difference in education, she created the CLIPUS Foundation a group of 30 students who use the profits of recycled office supplies to buy school supplies for underprivileged D.C.-area children.

"I knew I wanted to do something to improve education," said Jiang, a junior at The Madeira School. "Then I found a statistic that 16 million kids in the country can't afford school supplies."

She said the name CLIPUS comes from the "tens of thousands of paper clips we sold" from her father's old office supplies. The last two letters create a promise for togetherness.

The 30 students who form the foundation go to school at Langley High School, Thomas Jefferson School for Science and Technology and Briar Woods High School.

Most of the money is collected by getting cash for recycled toners. She said some toners can fetch \$7 each. The foundation has a partnership with The Langley School - her first school and where she cred-School and local grocery stores trepreneur."

to collect more funds.

On Tuesday, she sent 100 backpacks filled with \$2,000 worth of notebooks, pens and crayons to Cannon Road Elementary, located in Silver Spring. It was the first time CLIPUS donated school supplies to a school since the foundation was established in August.

"When we talked to Cannon [Elementary], they seemed very interested and wanted to make it into a big event," said Jiang. "We had talked to schools since November."

"I think it's a wonderful opportunity for our families," said school counselor Lise Valenta.

Approximately 60 percent of the school qualifies for free or reduced school lunch. The school also hosts the Smart Sacks Backpack Program, which is hosted by National Council of Negro Women Potomac Valley section leader Carolyn Shackleford. This program gives families food to eat over the weekend — a time when students cannot depend on a hot meal at school.

Because of the number of underprivileged children in D.C., Jiang hopes to expand the program's outreach to older students one day. However, she's very cognizant of the fact she will be graduating from high school in a year — leaving the CLIPUS Foundation behind. She hopes to pass it along to some its her drive to give back to the of the underclassmen who are community - and Adventure a part of the group. "Children's Theater in Glen Echo to house education is a passion of mine, toner drives. CLIPUS has also but I think I want to become an held bake sales at The Madeira engineer," she said. "Or an en-

News

Budget Competition

Taxes to increase across Northern Virginia, some more than others.

By Michael Lee Pope
The Connection

wo things are certain in life, death and taxes. And just as the spring flowers start to bloom this time a year, so do concerns about rising tax bills. As local governments across Northern Virginia consider budget proposals, taxpayers are reaching for their wallets. A review of proposed budgets in the region shows residential property taxpayers in Fairfax are looking at the largest potential increase, more than \$300. Taxpayers in Alexandria are looking at the smallest potential increase, less than \$200.

"There is always a competition among Northern Virginia local governments for who can either cut the most or raise their property tax the least," said Frank Shafroth, director of the Center for State and Local Leadership at George Mason University. "So it is a healthy competition."

Now that government executives have presented their proposed budgets to elected officials, members of the public are presenting their input in a series of formal public hearings and informal discussions. At issue for government leaders is what kinds of investments are necessary to enhance property values, the cash cow for jurisdictions in Virginia. Shafroth says homeowners generally want to see their assessments increase, although nobody wants to pay the higher tax bill.

"All of that, of course, could change significantly if Congress eliminates the deductibility of the property tax and limits the home mortgage deduction," said Shafroth. "Those two changes would make today's whines seem ludicrous in comparison."

IN FAIRFAX COUNTY, the county executive has proposed a tax rate of \$1.085 for every \$100 of assessed value. Earlier this month, the Board of Supervisors voted to advertise a real estate rate that's two cents higher, \$1.105 for every \$100 of assessed value. Budget officials say one penny of the tax rate is equal to about \$21.9 million in general revenue, and an additional \$50 for the average residential property taxpayer. That means that supervisors might end up increasing the average bill more than \$400.

"It is important that the board allows for flexibility in considering a tax rate so that debate and discussion is not cut off at the very beginning of the budget process," said Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova. "The board can adopt a tax rate that is lower but not higher than what is advertised."

Last month, County Executive Ed Long presented a proposed budget with flat commercial tax revenues and lower than expected tax revenues for sales taxes, hotel taxes and business and professional license taxes. Budget officials say the only area that is experiencing an upward tick is the assessed value of residential property. That means homeowners are likely to get stuck with a higher tax bill just to keep the current level of service.

"As the county continues to face fiscal challenges, we must persist in our cautious and deliberative approach to budgeting, only funding items that are healthier commercial base that wasn't contributing to an 18 percent vacancy rate, we would not have seen the 0.68 percent growth from last year to this year."

PROPOSED TAX INCREASES

- Alexandria: The average residential property tax bill would increase from \$4,901 to \$5,091. The additional \$190 would be a 3.88 percent increase.
- Arlington: The average residential property tax bill would increase from \$5,278 to \$5,560. The additional \$282 would be a 5 percent increase.
- ❖ Fairfax: The average residential property tax bill would increase from \$5,071 to \$5,403. The additional \$332 would be a 6.54 percent increase.

sustainable," said Long. "We also must be ready to make the necessary decisions to maintain investment in our services, infrastructure and development of the community."

IN ARLINGTON, county manager has proposed a tax rate of \$1.006 for every \$100 of assessed value, which includes the base rate of \$0.993 and the county-wide sanitary district rate of \$0.013 for stormwater management. Last month, members of the Arlington County Board voted to advertise no increase in the rate, which means elected officials must find a way to balance the budget using the increase in property values. Fortunately for Arlington, property values in the county have been some of the strongest in the region.

"The gap between funding for ongoing county services and revenues that I predicted in the fall was eliminated by our higher-than-anticipated real estate assessments," said County Manager Barbara Donnellan. "But we must still work to achieve efficiencies and continue to invest in our community."

In Arlington, unlike Alexandria, the tax base is split evenly between residential property and commercial property. County budget officials say that's a blessing and a curse. When residential values declined during the recession, jurisdictions that were heavily reliant on them suffered. But commercial properties have been sluggish in the wake of sequestration and shutdown because the local economy is so heavily tied to the fate of the federal government. That means that Arlington finds itself balanced between two different markets instead of tied to the fate of one.

"We like to say we like balanced development in the county," said Budget Director Richard Stephenson. "But that can be good or bad depending on where we are in the cycle."

IN ALEXANDRIA, the city manager has proposed a tax rate of \$1.038 for every \$100 of assessed value. Earlier this month, City Council members voted to advertise a tax rate that's half a cent higher. That tax rate of \$1.043 for every \$100 of assessed value would raise the average residential property tax bill by \$230. Thats' a 7 percent increase compared to last year.

"I did not run to raise property taxes," said Councilwoman Allison Silberberg. "But we have some growing needs."

Unlike Arlington, Alexandria's tax revenues lean heavily toward residential properties. Almost 33 percent of the city's revenues come from residential property taxpayers, while commercial property taxpayers contribute only 25 percent of the tax base. That means the average single-family house, which increased about 3 percent this year, is shouldering a disproportionate amount of the burden for the increased cost of government in Alexandria.

"We have an 18 percent vacancy rate that's devaluing the commercial side of the ledger," said Alexandria Budget Director Nelsie Smith. "If we had a healthier commercial base that wasn't contributing to an 18 percent vacancy rate, we would not have seen the 0.68 percent growth from last year to this year."



HOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Enjoying the music at Great Falls Farmers Market.

Farmers Market Outside Again

By Kathleen Murphy
Market Manager

eighbors and vendors alike thoroughly enjoyed a beautiful winter season in the warm protection of the Great Falls Grange Hall. With warm apple cider, hot empanadas, artisan bakery, raw vegan, green-house, tunnel and field grown veggies and lots of music on stage, we now all share some very warm memories of a very cold and unforgiving winter.

As we moved outside to the parking lot next to Wells Fargo Bank at 778 Walker Road this past Saturday, we prepared once again to brave the many surprises of nature to bring amazing produce, prepared foods, artisan creations, and gardening expertise to our community.

Our experience at the Grange has only fortified our realiza-

tion that a farmers market is an experience of personal relationships. Great Falls and its surrounding neighbors form a community of highly discerning shoppers who are served by a circle of vendors who are growing, cultivating, producing or making what they truly love.

Here are some tips on how to enjoy the farmers market:

- ❖ Enjoy a snack while listening to the music;
- Bring re-useable bags with plenty of room;
- ♦ Decide on your priorities whether sustainable farming, minimal pesticides, or organic;
- Consider adding some fermented and vegan elements to your diet;
- ❖ Ask questions, as well as recipes and tip;
- Let your social graces shine through gifts and cards that are a one-of-a-kind, handmade, artisan creations.

Last Saturday, Great Falls Farmers Market moved outside to the parking lot next to Wells Fargo Bank at 778 Walker Road.



BULLETIN BOARD

To have community events listed in the $connection new spapers.com.\ The\ dead line$ for submissions is the Friday prior to publication.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 26

McLean Community Center Governing Board Meeting. 7:30 p.m. MCC, 1234 Ingleside Avenue, McLean.

SATURDAY/MARCH 29

Ataxia Medical Meeting. 9 a.m.- 3 p.m. Registration 8:30 a.m. Offices of Dixon Hughes Goodman, 1410 Spring Hill Road, Suite 200, Tysons Corner. Information about the latest ataxia research will be presented at the annual medical meeting of the Chesapeake Chapter of the National Ataxia Foundation. Admission is free, but RSVP to request a box lunch (\$12.50 donation suggested). 703-759-2008 or ccnafpres@gmail.com. www.ataxia.org.

SATURDAY/APRIL 5

Navigating the Complexities of Lyme Disease. 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Vienna Presbyterian Church, 124 Park St, Vienna. Topics include: diagnosis & treatment, emotional and spiritual effects, and navigating the medical maze. Cost \$15 preregistration/\$20 at door. To register, visit http://bit.ly/ lymecomplexities.

TUESDAY/APRIL 8

NARFE (National Active and **Retired Federal Employees)** Vienna Oakton Chapter 1116 Meeting. 1:30 p.m. Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, Vienna. The program will be about the Vienna Town Council and mayor candidates. The meeting is open to all members and their guests. Refreshments will be served.

WEDNESDAY/APRIL 9

Pay Equity. Patrick Henry library, 101 Maple Ave East, Vienna. The Vienna branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) will host a discussion about pay equity. Call 703-321-7499 for more information

SATURDAY/ APRIL 12

McLean Child Safety Seat

Inspection Event. 9:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. Lewinsville Center, 1609 Great Falls Street, McLean. The Mclean District Police Station holds child safety seat inspections once per month.

MONDAY/APRIL 14

Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon.

11 a.m. – 2 p.m. Our Lady of Good Counsel, DeSales Hall, 8601 Wolftrap Road, Vienna. Each year the Shepherd's Center of Oakton-Vienna celebrates all the work of its many volunteers in a Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon. RSVP by March 27 to 703-281-0538. office@scov.org

THURSDAY/APRIL 17

Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter Meeting. Neighbor's Restaurant, 262D Cedar Lane, Cedar Lane Shopping Center, Vienna. Edward D. Connor, WW II Army Air Corps veteran, will discuss the Battle of the Bismarck Sea of March 2-4. 1943. Admission is free. For information, call Len Ignatowski at 703-255-0353 or visit www.vva227.org.

Great Falls Historical Society Seeks Nominations for Jean Tibbetts History Award

The Great Falls Historical Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the history of the area, invites community members to submit nominations for the Jean Tibbetts History Award, an annual award that honors outstanding contributors to the research, articulation, dissemination and preservation of the his-

McLean to west of Dranesville and south through Herndon.

Candidates for the Jean Tibbetts History Award are selected from annual nominations to Great Falls Historical Society and the award includes a stipend of \$200.

The awardee's name is placed on the Great Falls Historians plaque, displayed in the Great Falls Library.

Nominations should include a tory of life along the brief resume of the nominee; a list-Potomac River corridor from ing of significant achievements,

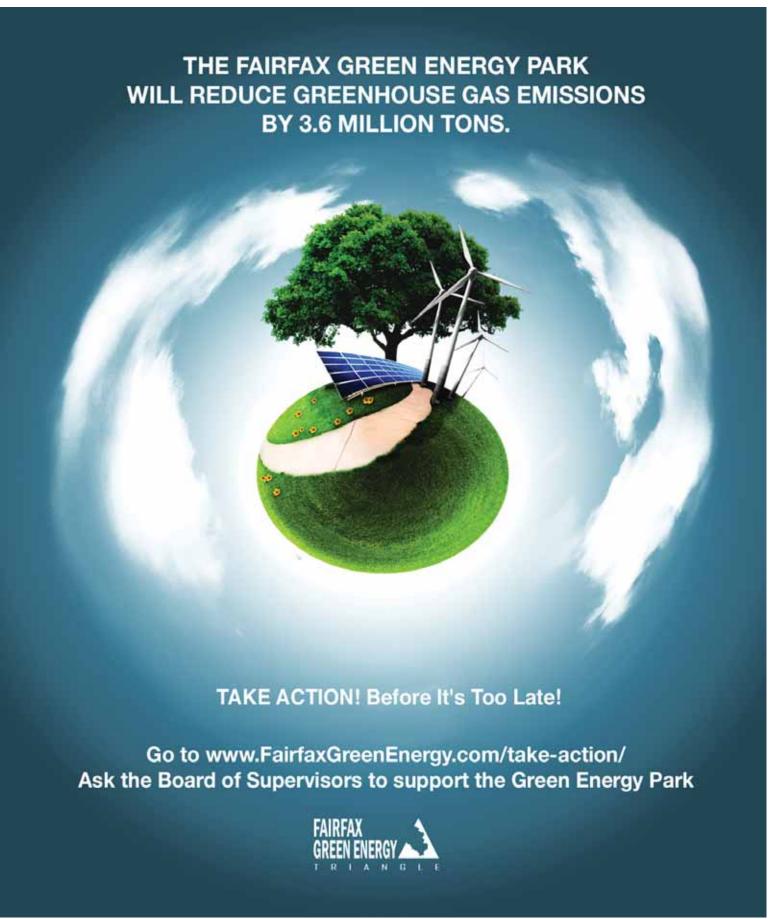
such as leading publications and noteworthy accomplishments; and a summary of the significance of the nominee's overall record of contributions.

Deadline for submission for the 2014 Award is April 21, 2014. Please mail nominations, with complete documentation, to GFHS History Award Committee, PO Box 56, Great Falls, VA 22066, or by email to award@ghfs.org.

Jean Tibbetts was a writer of

and displayed excellence in historical research. The Great Falls Historical Society is proud to commemorate her memory with this award, and we appreciate your support. Donations may be made to: Great Falls Historical Society, Attention: Treasurer, PO Box 56, Great Falls, Va., 22066.

For an online archive of the area's history, please visit the Great Falls Historical Society Great Falls history who recognized website at www.gfhs.org.



News

The Great Falls Grange: Monument to Community Improvement, 1929-2014

The Great Falls Grange Hall was the first grange hall built in Virginia.

By Kathleen Murphy
President/Great Falls Historical
Society

ighty-five years ago, on May 4, 1929, the Great Falls Grange Hall Number 738 was dedicated. "The Grange Hall is a monument to volunteerism, old-fashioned country neighborliness and community improvement from within", according to Milburn P. Sanders, founding member and long-time historian of the Great Falls Historical Society (The Story of the Grange, Milburn P. Sanders, www.gfhs.org).

This Great Falls Day, Sunday, May 4, 2014, GFHS will celebrate agriculture in the early 1900s, the National Grange, and the role of the Great Falls Grange organization and its National Register of Historic Places-designated building in our community over the last 85 years.

At a moment of profound cultural change and upheaval through the "roaring-1920s," the 29 charter members who signed the application to join the National Grange Patrons of Husbandry on Oct. 9, 1920 chose a path of highest personal and community ideals and intent. The Certificate of Incorporation of the Great Falls Grange No. 738, filed with the Circuit Court of Fairfax County on the 19th day of January 1928 – incorporated so that they could purchase land as a single entity to build the Hall - describes the intention of the Grange founders:

"The purposes for which said Corporation is formed are to advance the agricultural interests of our Community: to get together and work together fraternally and socially for this purpose; to develop a better and higher manhood and womanhood among ourselves and our Community, to foster mutual understanding and co-operation among the farmers of our Community; to enhance the comforts and attractions of our homes; to work for the best morals of our community; to educate and maintain a high



Photo contributed

The Great Falls Grange Hall, opening day: May 4, 1929.

standard of life among our children, and for mental, moral, social and material advancement of the people of our Community; to maintain the highest standards in pubic relations among ourselves and the people of our Community; to advocate Agricultural and Industrial Colleges and domestic science; and in politics to support and stand for the election of honest and faithful men for the purpose of making our Community a better place in which to live and to especially make our homes and farms more attractive and profitable and to work for any cause that may be beneficial to our homes and Community and for general prosperity."

some of these values linger in our community's honoring of land and nature, how we value education that advances humanity, the importance of a well kept home and our comfort with prosperity, mutual support, consideration, and collegiality. Imagine if our growingly diverse, cosmopolitan, global community of Great Falls would renew this pledge of commitment to each other in Community today?

As noted in the National Register of Historic Places' Significance Statement, The Great Falls Grange Hall, so honored, was the first grange hall built in Virginia and one of five granges to be built in Fairfax

County. The hall was not only used by the local Grangers, but as a meeting place and focal point for the entire community. Local activities conducted at the Grange included dances, picnics, ice cream socials, plays, parties, speeches, an annual Forestville Day and they offered the town the use of the hall and grounds due to its ideal central location - which encouraged fellowship and communication among local people. By 1956, the Great Falls Grange was the largest chapter in Virginia. Grange members would donate both their time and money to help out the sick and needy of Great Falls, making the Grange Hall a symbol of the generosity of the people who built it. (National Register of Historic Places, Statement of Significance Prepared by Charles Gailey, Fairfax County Park Authority, 2004)

Great Falls Day follows in the tradition of Forestville Day. The most senior members of GFHS (over 80 years of age) are the most dedicated to continuing this tradition and are present at every volunteer meeting, held every Tuesday, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the Great Falls Library. They demonstrate a commitment to a legacy that will surely die without a refreshment of our vows to Community and each other.

WHAT IS THE WAY FORWARD? Is it volunteering, as some may say? Or donat-

Great Falls Day



THE CDEAT EALLS CDANCE

A Monument to Community Cooperation May 4, 2014 1 PM to 5 PM 9818 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls, VA 22066

"The Great Falls Grange is a monument to volunteerism, oldfashioned country neighborliness and community improvement."

in us in celebrating our roots in an agricultural economy, the National Grange wement, and our local Great Falls Grange Hall Number 738 – the first Grange Il built in Virginia, now 85 years old.

njoy barn-building, sustainable farming, heirloom seeds, animals, historic farm tifacts, the National Grange President will speak, history displays, games, a

A flyer announcing the Great Falls Day on May 4, 2014, 1-5 p.m.

ing whatever you can, whenever you would like? Or expecting the most successful among us to provide the donations needed by our entire community on their own? Or is the way forward a firm annual commitment of a predictable sum toward the growth, refinement, and betterment of our place in the world, Great Falls, Virginia?

How can we give vote and voice in our community's destiny to all who live within its boundaries? How can we access funds our community can count on to accomplish whatever is in our community's collective heart to fulfill? Are we in need of a collective, local, community-based structure that would articulate our local vision, create the necessary focus, and orchestrate initiatives that lead to specific community improvements? What wisdom do the Grange founders whisper to us as we examine their legacy, celebrating the dedication of the Great Falls Grange Hall No. 738 on May 4,1929 and the history of the Grange since that time? As we begin to fundraise for Great Falls Day, we invite you to consider the mission of the Great Falls Historical Society in preserving the story of our community for future generations to know and reflect upon. Donations gathered for Great Falls Day 2014 enable us to offer a local history day to all with free admission. Please visit our web site at www.gfhs.org for more information.

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SCHOOLS

Nurturing Talent at Forestville

As Fairfax County considers reducing the number of assistant principals, Marietta Arbach — Assistant Principal at Forestville Elementary — seems too busy to think about it.

Her day begins at 7:15 with a walkthrough of the school. She then "greets the children with hugs and high fives," according to PTA President Jamie Finch.

During the day her duties vary. They may include coordinating and analyzing the school's battery of standardized tests, such as eCART, CogAT, Naglieri, and WEDA. To prepare for this, she receives training every year. She then uses this knowledge to train teachers on how to administer the tests. After they are given, she then analyzes the results.

Arbach also sits on a committee overseeing Individual Education Program (IEP) needs. This committee determines whether a student with learning difficulties qualifies for either an IEP or a more limited 504 Plan. She also works with Special Education teachers to help ensure that the goals of the com-



Photo by David Kroeger

mittee are being met.

Arbach also schedules weekly team meetings for the teachers. "This allows all of the teachers a chance to collaborate," says Arbach.

Assistant Principal Marietta Arbach.

Arbach has taught at most elementary school grades, which is reflected in her outlook. "All children have talent. As educators, we have to find that talent and nurture it."

She can sometimes be found in the classroom as a substitute. Arbach also assists with Forestville's many evening functions. "I am somewhat of a Jackof-all-trades," she says. Due to funding shortfalls, the school system has plans to eliminate 731 positions. While the budget has not been finalized, this may include cutting some assistant principal positions at elementary schools. Many hope that this will not include Arbach.

"Her smile is present the whole day. At dismissal Mrs. Arbach waves goodbye to the children boarding the buses and heading to their parents' cars with even more hugs, high fives and smiles. She is loved by students, parents, and faculty alike," Finch said.

— Dave Kroeger



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Club activities include: adult and junior tennis year-round private and group lessons, camps and tournaments with two of Northern Virginia's top tennis professionals, adult and junior NVTL tennis teams, junior NVSL swim and dive teams, tennis, swim & dive group and/or private lessons and lots of fun, family social activities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT SHERI AT slandf@aol.com | www.gfsandt.com

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OPINION

Challenging Budgets

Local Government should be able to access income taxes to give relief on real estate taxes.

orthern Virginia governments are facing shortfalls in the classic budget sense: projected revenues are less than last year's expenditures plus increases in costs.

Alexandria City Manager Rashad Young Young: "This is the seventh straight year of budgetary challenges, where the cost of current services and previous commitments exceeds our revenue growth." His proposed budget includes \$190.6 million for Alexandria City Public Schools, a 2.62 percent increase over FY2014 but \$2.5 million less than requested by the Alexandria School Board.

Fairfax County Chairman of the Board of Supervisors Sharon Bulova: "This will be a very challenging budget." Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent Karen Garza proposed an increase of 5.7 percent, \$98 million more than the schools requested last year, but supervisors have said to expect an increase of 2

Fairfax County, along with Arlington and Alexandria, is wrestling with how to fund increasing financial requests from schools, increasing needs for human services and providing a safety net, and many other areas of local

In Virginia, localities are allowed few areas of revenue, and local budgets are funded primarily through real estate property taxes. Prop-

EDITORIAL

erty values have increased this year, and local governments are also considering increases in the property tax rate, meaning homeowners will pay more in taxes.

Fairfax County Real Estate Assessments increased 5.8 percent for single family homes, 8.4 percent for townhouses and 10.5 percent for condos. In Arlington, property values grew about 5.8 percent this year. That includes single-family houses and townhouses, which went up 6.2 percent, as well as condominiums, which went up 5.9 percent. In Alexandria, residential assessments increased 4.8 percent.

But just because a home is worth more this year than last year doesn't actually put any more money in anyone's pocket. The increases are mostly modest and necessary in an area that prides itself on providing an exceptional quality of life and thriving business environ-

Employment and jobs are also strong in Northern Virginia, with unemployment at 3.7 percent in Fairfax, 4.1 percent in Alexandria and 3.2 percent in Arlington. Northern Virginia is the economic engine of Virginia. The overall unemployment rate in Virginia is 5 percent, with these statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. These rates are far below the national rate.

But state income tax, paid disproportionately by workers in Northern Virginia, are collected by the state for the state budget. The exact percentage of money that returns to Northern Virginia is debated, but it is definitely small. Localities should have the ability to add a piggyback tax to the state income tax in order to provide needed and expected services while giving relief to homeowners.

Anyone familiar with the political process in Virginia knows that this is a pipe dream with essentially zero chance. It would have to pass the Virginia General Assembly. Nevertheless, it makes no sense for Northern Virginia to pay income taxes to the state without being able

Meanwhile, Arlington FY 2015 tax rate public hearing is March 27 at 7 p.m. More on Arlington's budget: countyboard.arlingtonva.us/budget/

Fairfax County's public hearings, all in the board auditorium at the government center: Effective Tax Rate Hearing 3 p.m., April 8, 2014; Budget Public Hearing 6 p.m., April 8; 3 p.m., April 9; 3 p.m., April 10. More on County Budget, www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb/

For more on Alexandria's budget https:// www.alexandriava.gov/budget/info/ default.aspx?id=75641.

A favorite guideline on testimony at budget hearings comes in Arlington: "Repetitious testimony is discouraged." Good luck with that.

MARY KIMM

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Mental Health and the Expansion of Medicaid

By Barbara Favola STATE SENATOR (D-31)

here is a growing consensus forming in the General Assembly that now is the time to improve the safety net for mental

health services. Both the House and Senate budgets increase funding for these services by millions of dollars (House proposed a \$10 million increase and the Senate \$20 million) above the proposed budget of \$36 million that Governor McDonnell presented in December.

What Virginians may not know is that under Marketplace Virginia in the Senate budget, the State would gain approximately \$200M a year for mental health services and 77,000 uninsured Virginians needing these services would benefit from this plan.

These dollars would support medication, therapy, community based treatment programs and inpatient hospitalization that individuals could access when the first signs of mental illness show them- vent more serious escalation of be-

selves. In a recent study funded by the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services with the University of Virginia's Institute of Law, Psychiatry and Public Policy, (A Study

of Face-To-Face Emergency Evaluations Conducted By Community Services Boards In April 2013), we learned that nearly 50 percent of the voluntary admissions to psychiatric hospitals could have been avoided if early treatment and community based services had been available; 25 percent of involuntary admissions could have been avoided.

A recent report from the organization, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. entitled "Cut Violence, Cut Prison Costs" noted that "If low-income families receive medical insurance, on the ballot and already she's they are more likely to be routinely screened and treated for their health problems such as substance abuse, depression or excessive aggression. Health care professionals tell us that early treatment can pre-

haviors that can be harmful to the individual, to family members and to the general public.

Senator Deeds' bill (SB 260) and other bills before the General Assembly take important steps to improve the crisis safety net. I applaud those steps but I believe that treating mental illness must begin at a much earlier stage and this will only happen if more people have insurance to pay for these services. In fact, Margaret Nimmo Crowe, executive director of Voices for Virginia's Children, notes: "There is 'no way' Virginia can successfully reform its mental-health-care system without addressing the uninsured."

This is why it is so critical that Virginia seize the opportunity to leverage Federal dollars by adopting Marketplace Virginia.

The House budget conferees should not hold Virginians hostage in an ideological lock. Marketplace Virginia has the potential to make us all healthier and safer while the Federal government absorbs a significant amount of the cost.

Now is the time to act.

Barbara Favola (D-31) is a state senator representing parts of Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun counties.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lying Already?

[Barbara] Comstock is not even throwing lies around in a letter designed to raise Republican hackles and raise money for her primary. She reported that John Foust, Dranesville Supervisor on the Fairfax Board and her likely opponent for the 10th District,

"just voted last night for an 8.5 percent tax hike on homeowners." Truth is that Foust actually voted for a cap on property taxes, which was agreed to by Republicans and Democrats working together on the Board. Really, Barbara, a baldfaced lie, and one so easy to catch, doesn't help your image.

> Linda Burchfiel McLean

Great Falls

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LETTERS

Neighbors' Side of Story

To the Editor:

Reference: Special permit application for a riding stables business at 815 Blacks Hill Road.

We are property owners who have experienced significant disruption by Blacks Hill Stables, LLC in our neighborhood for several years, who would be most directly impacted by the special permit, if approved. To date, opposing neighbors have not been interviewed and we note increasing misinformation being publicly reported. We would like to share at least some of our side of the story.

Section 10-303 of the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance states: "Home Occupations NOT Permitted 6.) Riding or boarding stables or kennels."

Despite the zoning law, the stables business was built in 2009, and operated until cited for its violation in June 2012, with no outreach to neighbors, apparently oblivious to the adverse impact it was having on so many residents. In May 2012, neighbors finally felt they had no option but to report the violation by the expanding business. It currently operates out the residential property with lessons held offsite.

Why did neighbors file a zoning violation complaint, and why are neighbors opposed to the special permit application now the county process is being followed?

There are residential properties in Great Falls that might be suitable locations for a riding stables business, but 815 Blacks Hill Road is not one of them.

The riding stable is located in the heart of our residential neighborhood and there is no public access to the business. Stables traffic travels half a mile each way over a private, single-lane, dirt and gravel, deadend, shared driveway that is jointly maintained for residential use only, causing great disturbance to neighbors who live along the way, impeding ingress and egress, and creating safety and liability issues. A riding stable that primarily operates evenings and weekends is inappropriate in the middle of a residential neighborhood.

Our opposition is unrelated to horses. We chose to live in an equestrian residential neighborhood and we like our horse neighbors. Our Blacks Hill neighborhood is a private, secluded, low-density (ten residences) bucolic slice of life. We have an abundance of wildlife, and our shared driveway is used as a peaceful nature trail for jogging and walking. This was the quiet, country neighborhood character that informed our property purchase decisions. It changed in 2009.

We deal with large dust clouds from more frequent and heavier traffic, flying gravel, never ending potholes, tire tracks on lawns, impeded ingress and egress, noise (trailers on gravel sound like freight trains, unwelcome on weekend mornings), speeding, near misses (cars, people, pets) and knocked over bins and "children, go slow" signs. Residents whose gardens back up to Blacks Hill Road were forced to put up fences for safety. The neighborhood entrance is especially narrow. Of public safety concern is emergency vehicle access and

even more people and animals needing to evacuate the neighborhood. In 2004, the fire department had difficulty accessing a barn fire with their trucks and water tank systems (no fire hydrants) and tragically 26 animals and birds died.

There are no easy solutions to the changed and increased road use. Paving could exacerbate flooding that our downhill properties experience, dust control chemicals can harm well water, wildlife, pets, and cars. At the height of business activities, the applicants did not acknowledge their disproportionate and changed use of the shared driveway, and do not view reaching a neighbor road management agreement as related to their special permit application.

Despite verbal presentations at the GFCA March 10 meeting, the written application on file, dated January 2013 proposes year round lessons, Monday to Sunday, from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., with up to 12 students per day who would carpool. The county informed the applicants this was too much.

The applicants have stated they have made concessions and will reduce lesson to five (unspecified) days per week, ending at 7 p.m., similar to daycare. Daycare has a different business footprint and is typically operated during business hours on week days. Blacks Hill Stables, in addition to summer camp, currently operates after school, evenings and weekends, when residents are home, expecting to enjoy their private residences in peace and quiet. Daycare, for as many as 12 children in a residential neighborhood, also requires a special permit.

Our single-lane, unpaved shared driveway is adequate for low density residential use, but fell apart with the business use. It was Grand Central Station some weekends, with vehicles every few minutes! It is unclear what portion of increased traffic that remains today is by right and what portion is related to stables business, but the driveway is not adequately designed or maintained for increased and changed use. Those of us who reside at the beginning of the road, bear the greatest burden of it.

As for what is currently proposed, the applicants listed how much traffic they could put on our shared driveway that would be their right under zoning law. In our opinion, given the nature of our road and neighborhood, what technically may be "by right" is not necessarily the reasonable thing to do.

We need to alleviate, not exacerbate the situation.

The Molsters have prepared a full court press, reaching out to the media and the greater equestrian community asking them to write letters, sign petitions, and speak at meetings to "Save Our Barn." But these, no doubt, well-meaning people do not live here, and based on public comments, are unfamiliar with what has transpired over the years. Meantime, equestrian activists and stables supporters tug at public heartstrings with stories about the benefits and need for riding lessons for children.

And, we neighbors who have lived with discourtesy and disruption in our neighborhood since 2009, including an endless zon

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 17



Alex celebrated her 16th wearing her gown, not ours.

Alexandria was diagnosed with bone cancer her first year of high school. Instead of going to an adult hospital, her family got help from a cancer treatment team focused completely on pediatric medicine. Watch how specialized care created a special day at JustRightForChildren.com/Alex.



SPRING Fun 2014

The New York **Neo-Futurists** in 'Too Much **Light Makes** the Baby Go Blind.'



Neo-Futurists' 'Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind' at The Alden

The Alden in McLean welcomes The New York Neo- is that they are performed from a perspective of abso-"fourth wall" to allow cast members to interact with Avenue, inside the McLean Community Center. Free parking is available.

In this show, an underground New York City favorite, the eccentric New York Neo-Futurists race against the clock to perform 30 miniature plays in 60 breathless minutes. The single unifying element of these plays or call 703-790-0123, TTY: 711.

Futurists in "Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go lute honesty. With a continually updated menu of vi-Blind," a fast-paced show that drops the traditional gnettes ranging from zany to risqué to profound, it's a perfect interactive evening. Each act is performed in a the audience. The single performance will be at 8 p.m. random order guided in part by the loudly shouting on Friday, April 11. Tickets are \$20/\$15 for MCC disaudience members. Rather than upholding contempotrict residents. The theatre is located at 1234 Ingleside rary theatrical conventions of character, setting, plot and the separation of audience and performer, the Neo-Futurists aim to present actual life on stage by creating a world in the theater that has no pretense or illusion.

Tickets are on sale now. For more information or to purchase tickets online, visit: www.aldentheatre.org



evening of silent films with live musical accompaniment on **Wednesday April** 16, at 7:30 p.m.

The Alden in

McLean will

celebrate Charlie

Chaplin's 125th

birthday with an

Celebrating Chaplin's 125th Birthday

The Alden in McLean will celebrate Charlie During this evening tribute, audience members will Chaplin's 125th birthday with an evening of silent have the opportunity to enjoy some of Chaplin's funfilms with live musical accompaniment on Wednes- niest comedies. Film historian and preservationist day April 16, at 7:30 p.m. A star of the silent era, Bruce Lawton, who has worked with the Chaplin es-Chaplin was a British comic actor, filmmaker and comtate to restore the filmmaker's work, will host the poser who rose to fame with such films as "The Gold program. Composer Ben Model will enhance the hi-Rush," "City Lights" and "The Great Dictator." Tickets larity of this evening of first-class entertainment with SATURDAY/APRIL 5 are \$10, \$6 for MCC district residents. The theatre is his musical accompaniment. These 16mm editions Six Artists Return Opening located at 1234 Ingleside Avenue, inside the McLean were restored by Lawton. Community Center.

important figures in the history of the film industry. www.aldentheatre.org/> or call 703-790-0123.

Tickets are on sale now. For more information or to Charlie Chaplin, whose name has become synony- purchase tickets online, visit: mous with silent film, is considered one of the most www.aldentheatre.org<http://

CALENDAR

TUESDAY/MARCH 25-SATURDAY/MARCH 29

Great Escapes. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Tues. Sat. Vienna Art Center, 115 Pleasant St., NW, Vienna. Dozens of original artworks by artists throughout the region inspired by travel at home and abroad. Free. 703-319-3971 www.ViennaArtsSociety.org

FRIDAY/MARCH 28-SUNDAY/APRIL 20

The Cripple of Inishmaan" Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. 1st Stage in Tysons, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons Corner. Excitement ripples through the sleepy Irish community of Inishmaan abuzz with the news that a Hollywood filmmaker plans to shoot a movie on a neighboring island. When young Cripple Billy lands a screen test, the oddball citizens of Inishmaan mount a heartbreakingly hilarious campaign bursting with dark humor and touching devotion. General admission: \$27. Seniors \$22. Students and Military \$15. Purchase online at www.1ststagetysons.org or 703-854-

SATURDAY/MARCH 29

Great Falls the World Hub of Innovation & Invention. 1-3 p.m.

Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetow Pike, Great Falls. Students, hobbyists and academics from around the world are competing and collaborating in development small robotic aircraft to help protect endangered species including rhinos, elephants, and snow leopards. Using computer aided design, 3D printing and simple arduino-based robotics kits, the teams are able to create unmanned aerial vehicles that are optimized for the mission, exceeding the performance of aircraft that cost thousands of

SUNDAY/MARCH 30 Capitol Steps" at James Madisor

High School. 4 p.m., James Madison High School, 2500 James Madison Dr, Vienna. Capitol Steps, the quick witted multi-faceted congressional staffers, will be performing their popular fast-paced musical political satire live. \$30. jmhscapsteps@gmail.com.

WEDNESDAY/APRIL 2

Vienna Photographic Society

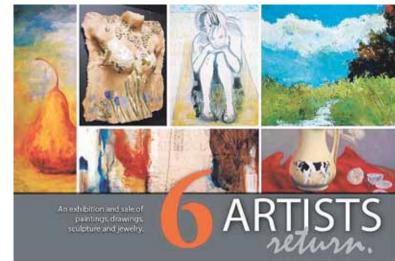
Meeting. 7:30-9:30 p.m. Oakton Elementary School, 3000 Chain Bridge Rd., Oakton. Will Schermerhorn will discuss photography in the context of the Special Olympics. Special Olympics is a worldwide organization of more than 4.2 million people with intellectual disabilities who use the power of sports to reveal the champions within. From a photographer's perspective, the key is finding the right photos to express the essence of Special Olympics. www.vpsva.org.

FRIDAY/APRIL 4-MONDAY/MAY 5

Six Artists Return. 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. The Frame Factory, 212 Dominion Road NE, Vienna. An exhibition and sale of paintings, drawings, sculpture and jewelry by local artists Jackie Elwell Elaine Florimonte, Debbie Glakas, Lisa Neher, Sarah Swart and Barbara Wagner. www.theframefactory1.com

Factory, 212 Dominion Road NE. Vienna. An exhibition and sale of paintings, drawings, sculpture and jewelry by local artists Jackie Elwell, Elaine Florimonte, Debbie Glakas, Lisa Neher, Sarah Swart and Barbara

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



An exhibition and sale of paintings, drawings, sculpture and jewelry by local artists Jackie Elwell, Elaine Florimonte, Debbie Glakas, Lisa Neher, Sarah Swart and Barbara Wagner, from Friday April 4 through May 5 at the Frame Factory in Vienna.

Wagner. www.theframefactory1.com Book Sale. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Tysons Pimmit Regional Library, 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church.

SUNDAY/APRIL 6

The History of the Country Store.4-6 p.m. Freeman Store, 131 Church Street, NE, Vienna. The exhibit utilizes artifacts, period apparel, tools, posters and other materials to tell the story of local general stores which often served as grocery, post office, voting precinct, pharmacy, feed and grain supplier, hardware store, as well as filling a role as community centers. The exhibit is free and open to the public and will be in place through 2014. For more information www.historicviennainc.org.

Book Sale Clearance. 1 – 4 p.m. Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library, 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church.

WEDNESDAY/APRIL 9

Wildfire Toasts the Silver Line. 6:30 p.m. Wildfire, 3rd floor, Tysons Corner, McLean. Toast the coming of the Silver Line and the great future for Tysons at Wildfire with a four course custom menu designed by Executive Chef Eddie Ishaq, each course paired with a sparkling wine from around the world. Michael Caplin, executive director of the Tysons Partnership, will be the guest speaker. The Tysons Partnership is a dynamic association of citizens and area businesses working with local government to transform Tysons into he next great American city. Michae Caplin will talk about plans for Tysons and answer questions. \$80/ per person. RSVP Amanda or Erika at

FRIDAY/APRIL 11

"Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind." 8 p.m. The Alden, 1234 Ingleside Avenue, McLean. In this show, an underground New York City favorite, the eccentric New York Neo Futurists race against the clock to perform 30 miniature plays in 60 reathless minutes. Tickets are \$20/ \$15 for MCC district residents

SATURDAY/ APRIL 12

Train Club's 65th Anniversary Model Railroad Open House. 1-5 p.m. 231 Dominion Road NE, Vienna. Celebrate the Northern Virginia Model Railroaders' 65th Anniversary See and hear model trolleys and steam and diesel trains plus Thomas and some of his friends in the Historic Vienna Train Station along the W&OD trail just past the Caboose. The

www.ConnectionNewspapers.com

impressive layout reflects the mountainous terrain and towns of Western North Carolina with award winning structures. Free admission (donations accepted). For more information visit www.nvmr.org. Flea Market. 8 a.m. – 2 p.m. Vienna's

American Legion 330 Center St, N,

Vienna. Space \$20; tables-\$5. Contact Debbie at 703-938-9535 for more info Paws for Art Fundraiser. Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. This April, your artwork can help us save more es, and help us raise awareness of LDCRF. Donations of artwork in any media are still being accepted for the LDCRF Paws for Art Show and Sale.

SATURDAY/ APRIL 12-SUNDAY/APRIL 13 Spring Table Tennis Tournament.

10 a.m.- 4 p.m. on Saturday and 9 a.m. to noon on Sunday. Old Firehouse Teen Center, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. The fee to articipate is \$5 per person, per even for The Northern Virginia Table Tennis Club members and \$10 per person, per event for all others. All events are round-robin, followed by a single elimination. Prizes will be awarded to the champion and runner up in each of three divisions: beginner, intermediate and advanced Semifinals and finals are best three out of five. All other matches are best two out of three. The tournament director reserves the right to modify or cancel events based on the number of entries. To register for the tournament, or for more information, visit www.nvtcc.org

WEDNESDAY/ APRIL 16

125th Birthday Celebration for Charlie Chaplin.7:30 p.m. The Alden, 1234 Ingleside Avenue, McLean. The Alden in McLean will celebrate Charlie Chaplin's 125th birthday with an evening of silent films with live musical accompaniment. For more information or to purchase tickets online, visit: www.aldentheatre.org or call 703-790-0123.

ONGOING

Straight Ahead Jazz. 8 p.m., at the Vienna. Every Monday drummer Karl Anthony hosts a night of straight ahead jazz featuring guest musicians and open to sit-in musicians.

Personalized ebook/e-Reader **Instruction**. Dolley Madison Library, 1244 Oak Ridge Ave., McLean. Learn about your e-reader

and downloading eBooks; event continues through March 31. www.ConnectionNewspapers.com

McLean Community Center The Center of It All

Here's What's Happening at MCC

An Alden Theatre Production "Miss Nelson is Missing"

Sat. & Sun, March 29-30 and April 5-6, 3 p.m. \$10/\$8 MCC district residents

Studio Rep "Code 20: Proceed to Improv"

Thursday, April 10, 7-9 p.m. Old Firehouse Teen Center Free admission



New York Neo-Futurist "Too Much Light Makes The Baby Go Blind"

Friday, April 11, 8 p.m. \$20/\$15 MCC district residents



Bear Hunt Productions "We're Going on a Bear Hunt" Saturday, April 12, 2 p.m.

\$15/\$10 MCC district residents

McLean Spring Community Garage Sale & Recycling Event Saturday, April 12, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

> 1420 Beverly Road Free admission

Spring Break Trips Mon-Fri, April 14-18, 8 a.m-6 p.m.

Destinations/Activities vary

The McLean Community Center www.mcleancenter.org Home of the Alden Theatre

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Great Falls Connection & March 26 - April 1, 2014 & 11

10 Great Falls Connection March 26 - April 1, 2014

Spring Fun 2014



Photos by Reena Singh/ The Connection

Best in Show

Katie's Cars and Coffee pulls hundreds of the best DMV cars.

Great Falls
resident Peter
Jungck brought
his souped-up
Dodge Ram SRT
to Katie's Cars
and Coffee
Saturday show.

By Reena Singh The Connection

he biggest buzz about Katie's Coffee in Great Falls comes from much more than the free flow of caffeine.

Every Saturday, hundreds of rare and classic cars from all over the east coast gather in the parking lot to talk shop for an early morning event dubbed Katie's Cars and Coffee.

The event takes place from 6:30 to 9 a.m. and invites all cars - free of charge - to attend. Project cars, classic antiques and flashier models - like bright yellow Ferraris - have all been seen in attendance.

"For us, it's about seeing cars and meeting people," said Great Falls resident Peder Jungck (CQ).

During this Saturday's event, Jungck brought a silver souped-up Dodge Ram SRT with a viper engine. He said he comes every week, even when the weather becomes unbearable for all except five or six dedicated show-goers. During the past Saturday, about 250 cars showed up, making it the biggest event of the season.

"Everyone here is so excited and passionate,"

Jungck said. "Every week, there's something you've never seen before."

Jungck chatted excitedly about a Bugatti that made an appearance last season.

For Michael Kearney, owner of Katie's Coffee and Old Brogue Irish Pub, \$2 million Bugattis are only a small part of what makes the Cars and Coffee event special.

"People come from all over the area," he said. "They come from the Carolinas. They come from New Jersey. The nice thing is that there's no specific type of car here. It's not just all high end or oldies."

In the nearly four years the event has been happening, he has seen everything from the Bugatti to a 16-foot plane that was mounted on a Toyota frame.

"It's kind of like a street fair," Kearney said. "It's a very special thing. And it helps that Katie's serves really good coffee."

North Potomac resident Joe Parlanti, owner of a hunter green 1966 Sunbeam Tiger, said he tries to make it to the event several times each season.

"We like the variety and quality here, but for us, it's about the drive," Kearney said.

His car, he said, is the British version of the Shelby. "It was sometimes called the poor man's Shelby," he said. "They made this car for only three years."

"We think, for sure, it's one of the largest cars and coffee events on the east coast," said Kearney. "It's the variety of cars that come in; it's the road on the way here; and it's the atmosphere of the area that makes it really special."

"Everyone here is so

Nearly 250
cars were at the Katie's
Cars and
Coffee event this Saturday.



Great Falls resident Peder Jungck shows off the Viper engine for his Dodge Ram SRT at Katie's Cars and Coffee show.

VIEWPOINTS

Where do you go for fun in Great Falls?

— Reena Singh

Stephen Jungck, student, Great Falls

"We like to mess around the woods and go to the shooting range. There's also an indoor trampoline place close by - Rebounderz."



Marika Tsombikos, handbag designer, Great Falls

"It's so beautiful here that I can't wait to drive with the roof of my car off."

Keyvan Moussavi, management counseling, Great Falls

"I love going to Great Falls Riverbend Park. I look forward to boating on the Potomac, and as it gets warmer, there'll be concerts on the green."



Spring Fun 2014

'Carmen' Comes to Area

Virginia Opera brings "Carmen" to Center for the Arts.

BY DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

irginia Opera, the Official Opera Company of the Commonwealth of Virginia, will present Georges Bizet's sultry tragedy about opera's most famous femme fatale, "Carmen." The opera has enthralled audiences for more than a century and is one of the most popular. "Carmen" follows Don José and his ill-fated obsession with the alluring Carmen who tosses him aside for another man leading to jealous

"At the Center for the Arts, we strive to offer programming that appeals to our patrons' diverse artistic tastes. Bizet's 'Carmen' is beloved by opera enthusiasts, and even those who are new to the genre are familiar with the music," said Jill Laiacona, George Mason University,

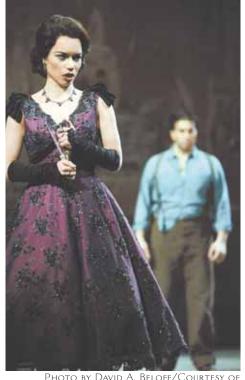


PHOTO BY DAVID A. BELOFF/COURTESY OF

Ginger Costa-Jackson as Carmen in Virginia Opera's production of "Carmen."

WHERE AND WHEN

Virginia Opera's "Carmen" at the George Mason University Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Performances are Friday, April 11 at 8 p.m. and Sunday, April 13 at 2 p.m. Tickets are Friday: \$44-\$86; Sunday: \$48-\$98. Youth Discount: tickets are half price for youth through grade 12. Call 888-945-2468 or visit cfa.gmu.edu

Public and Media Relations Coordinator. "One of its most famous arias, 'Habanera,' has been parodied countless times, including by The Muppets and The Marx Brothers. We're thrilled that Virginia Opera chose this work as the finale for its 39th season."

"The team that Virginia Opera brings to lead 'Carmen' has produced incredible opera both on our stage and in opera houses across the world," said Russell P. Allen, president and CEO of Virginia Opera. "Audiences can expect a production of 'Carmen' that will not disappoint."





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- Premier Invisalign Provider 2012, 2013
- Attending Faculty

 Orthodontic Department Children's/Washington Hospital

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News

Langley High Orchestra Inspires Florida School

By Susan McQuade

he smiling high school senior held her violin in her outstretched hands, offering to show the 6-year-olds how to play it. As she plucked the strings, a child recoiled in surprise, afraid that he was close enough to hurt the instrument. Twenty minutes later, that same child was holding the violin and the bow, exclaiming,"I want to play this."

Similar positive experiences occurred in five other classrooms at the Cherokee School in Orlando, Fla., when the Langley High School Orchestra brought student-led educational sessions and performed two concerts during a recent trip. The Cherokee School is a special education elementary school, part of Orange County Public Schools.

In classroom sessions taught by teams of high school musicians, principles of early childhood music were combined with sensorimotor experiences to give the Cherokee students the best possible introduction to a string orchestra. After a demonstration of how vibrations produce sound, freshman Aaron Grossman led a demonstration of the different sounds made by violins and violas. Students in senior Julia Hara's classroom enjoyed stomping their feet to establish a beat, and also learned how a conductor uses the beat to keep the orchestra musicians together. A student in sophomore Haley Simkins' class was fascinated with the conductor's baton. Cherokee students learned how they could use their bodies or hands to demonstrate dynamic changes in music.

MANY CHEROKEE STUDENTS enjoyed the opportunity to control the speed of the violins when they tried their hand at conducting in the classroom. Melody and harmony were introduced, and sophomore Erik Toor treated his class to his arrangement of a popular song for two violins and two vio-

When students asked questions, Langley Orchestra members were also happy to share information not related to music. In the classroom led by senior Harrison Nam,



Langley HS Orchestra and Cherokee School students show each other their family's country of origin.

"It was surprising how enthusiastic the students were, especially since they had not had much exposure to the instruments prior to the visit."

India, Lebanon, and Haiti. Cherokee students in the classroom led by senior Sara Ibrahim were curious to learn what sorts of other activities the orchestra students participated in. As Langley students identified extra-curricular activities such as Model UN, robotics club, sports, tech crew, scouts, art, and dancing, some Cherokee students requested further explanations and demonstrations. Lively discussions ensued as Langley Orchestra students explained why school is important, and described the many benefits of learning an instrument and playing in an orchestra. Cherokee teachers commended the Langley Orchestra students for their teamwork and leadership, and thanked them for

Langley and Cherokee students took

turns showing on a globe that their fami-

lies hailed from places such as Vietnam,

sharing their diverse backgrounds and

Langley students were thrilled by the warm welcome that they received at the Cherokee School. Prior to the visit, several orchestra students wrote letters to the school, introducing themselves and their instruments. Each classroom received a letter, and one was read over the loudspeaker to the entire school. The Cherokee students were very excited and curious, and the letter writers were touched to receive some letters back from Cherokee students. Sophomore Armon Moussavi-Nejad said, "I really

enjoyed reading the letter that an 11-yearold boy wrote back. In the letter, the Cherokee student shared some of his hobbies, described a recent trip, and said that he was looking forward to hearing me play in the orchestra."

MANCES were wonderful for everyone involved. Langley Orchestra presented classical music and selections from Disney mov-

THE TWO ORCHESTRA PERFOR-

ies that they performed just days earlier at Downtown Disney. Cherokee students enjoyed hearing so many musicians playing together, and their teachers noted that the introductions to the instruments and to the students were extremely beneficial. Many of the Cherokee students wanted to stand behind the orchestra so that they could get closer to the instruments, and when they

did so, they were captivated by the conductor and his baton. Prior to the orchestra performances, sophomores Lyric Yu and Theron Masters performed piano solos, including music the children might recognize. Masters was rewarded when students correctly identified the movie, "Pirates of the Caribbean" and the theme music from the Mario game.

Langley HS Orchestra and Cherokee School students hold violins and violas after the Langley students led

an educational session in a classroom.

Conductor Dr. Scott McCormick held up his baton at one point, and asked the elementary students if they knew what it was. When the student who had been fascinated with the baton in her class correctly answered the question, sophomore

Haley Simkins was pleased. "It was surprising how enthusiastic the students were, especially since they had not had much exposure to the instruments prior to the visit"

Afterwards, senior Alex Blankinship said, "I was glad to visit the Cherokee School because sharing music enabled me to meet children that I otherwise might not have had the opportunity to see." Violinist Julia Hara commented that "many students said that their favorite part of being in Florida was the experience at the Cherokee School. Langley Orchestra students like to get in touch with the community."

Susan McQuade is a Langley High School Orchestra volunteer who designed classroom sessions.



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Spring Fun 2014

Virginia Bluebells: Native Spring Beauty

Carpets of bluebells coming soon to a park near you.

By Donald Sweig

he Virginia Bluebells are coming!
In early Spring, these beautiful native wildflowers will burst into bloom profusely throughout much of the Washington area. Botanically named Mertensia virginica, one of a number of species of Mertensia, Virginia Bluebells can be found in many moist, woodland areas, especially along streams and rivers.

Depending on the weather, they first appear in early April as light pink buds, and then open into several shades of pink, blue and even white. In some areas along the local rivers they bloom in stunning profusion, creating a veritable carpet of color.

After perhaps ten-days to two weeks, the blossoms will fade and not appear again until the following Spring. They are not difficult to find in season and most wildflower enthusiasts have a favorite Bluebell haunt.

They are easy to find along the floodplain of the Potomac River at Turkey Run Park, a National Park Service site, on the George Washington Memorial Parkway, just inside the beltway in McLean.

There are also large and popular stands of Bluebells at the Bull Run Regional Park, a Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority site.

Look for them also at Great Falls National Park in Virginia, or along the C&O Canal in Potomac. Take your binoculars; bluebells often grow on the islands in the middle of the river.

Bluebells grow best, and most profusely, in the sandy soils of the floodplain along the local rivers. A particularly stunning and easily accessible stand of Bluebells is in Fairfax County's Riverbend Park, where one can walk the paths both up and down river



Photo by Donald Sweig

Classic Virginia Bluebells in full bloom. There are many local places to enjoy these native Virginia wildflowers, including Riverbend Park in Great Falls, Bull Run Park in Centreville and the C&O National HIstorical Park in Potomac. See sidebar.

from the visitor center with copious bluebells on both sides of the path. It's sight to behold. One might also notice other Spring wildflowers along the various trails, along the river floodplains and in the nearby woods.

The annual appearance of the Virginia Bluebells is a treat too sweet to miss. Take your camera to preserve the memory, but please don't pick the wild bluebells; they are very fragile and will soon wither if plucked.

If you are interested in growing these flowers yourself, they like moist to wet soil in part or mostly shaded areas, according to the Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia: "Best planted at the edge of a woodland path or by a shaded pond." Bluebells appear to be both deer and rabbit resistant.

Where to Look for Virginia Bluebells

Try these public places for reliable stands of Bluebells. Depending on the weather, early to mid-April is the best time to find them in full bloom.

Turkey Run Park, National Park Service, George Washington Memorial Parkway http://www.nps.gov/gwmp/planyourvisit/ turkeyrun.htm

Great Falls National Park, 9200 Old Dominion Dr, McLean, VA 22102 (703) 285-2965

http://www.nps.gov/grfa/index.htm

Bull Run Regional Park, Northern Virginia Regional Park

Authority, 7700 Bull Run Dr, Centreville, VA 20121 (703) 631-0550

https://www.nvrpa.org/park/bull_run

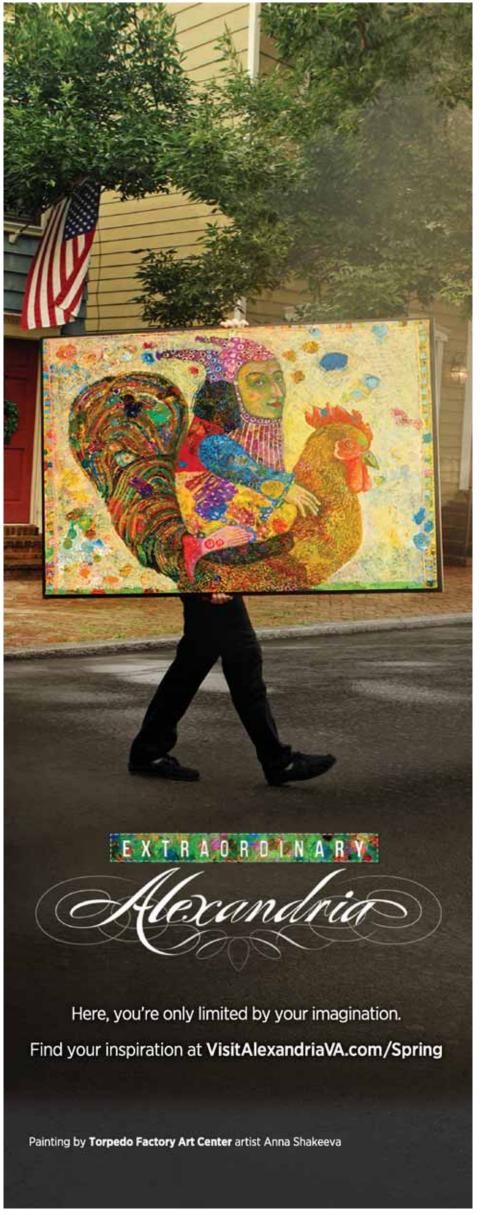
C&O Canal National Historic Park, 11710 MacArthur Blvd, Potomac (301) 582-0813 http://www.nps.gov/choh/index.htm

Look for the bluebells on the floodplain between the canal and the river or on the islands in the river.

Riverbend Park, Fairfax County Park Authority, 8700 Potomac Hills St, Great Falls (703) 759-9018

http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbendpark/

Riverbend is a particularly easy place to see a stunning display of Bluebells. The park is open every day, admission is free. Try calling the park to check when the bluebells are in full bloom. Visitor is center closed on Tuesdays. "Spring is wildflower time. Many species of spring ephemerals grace the river banks from March to June. Take a walk between carpets of Virginia Bluebells and Spring Beauties, and look for Wild Ginger, Dutchman's Breeches and Trout Lilies."



Sports

East All-Stars Beat West in Suburban Classic

McLean's Prock named East MVP; South Lakes' Jensen scores 22.

> By Jon Roetman The Connection

cLean senior guard Cami Prock "took a couple emotional days off" following the Highlanders' seasonending loss to T.C. Williams in the opening round of the 6A North regional tournament on Feb. 24.

Following her decompression session, Prock returned to the gym to work on her game. While her time with the McLean girls' basketball team was over, Prock's hard work paid off a month down the road with a strong performance in Sunday's 10th Suburban Classic all-star game at Oakton High School

As a member of the East all-stars, Prock scored a team-high 12 points and earned team MVP honors as the East defeated the West 78-64 on March 23.

THE SUBURBAN CLASSIC featured some of the top seniors from the 6A North and 5A North regions. The Northern Virginia Women's Basketball Coaches Association sponsored the event and helped raise scholarship money for athletes.

The East all-stars, coached by Edison's Dianne Lewis, led the West squad, coached by Madison's Kirsten Stone, 34-30 late in the second quarter. Prock helped the East pull away, though, scoring six points in the final 90 seconds of the first half as the team built a 41-30 halftime advantage.

Prock agreed that the environment was a combination of competitiveness and enjoyment.

"It was definitely a great mixture of both," she said. "I know when I'm competing and having fun at the same time, it's a great feeling."



McLean senior and East all-star Cami Prock, left, defends Centreville senior and West all-star Jenna Green during the 10th Suburban Classic on March 23 at Oakton High School. Each player earned MVP honors for her respective team.

Prock will attend the College of William & Mary next year and is debating whether to attempt to join the university's basketball team as a walk on.

South Lakes guard Caitlin Jensen, a member of the West all-stars, was another athlete who didn't take long to return to the gym after her high school season had ended. Jensen said she went back to work the following day after the Seahawks lost to Centreville in the regional quarterfinals on Feb. 25.

On Sunday, Jensen led all scorers with 22 points, including four 3-pointers.

"I've been working really hard since the season ended," Jensen said. "It's a great feeling."

Jensen will continue her basketball career next season at the University of Mary Washington. On this afternoon, she got to play once again with South Lakes teammate Abby Rendle, and with girls she had competed against during her high school career.

"It was a good experience," Jensen said.
"It was nice because I've played against these people forever and now playing on

PHOTOS BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION



Madison senior and West all-star Katie Kerrigan goes up for a shot during the 10th Suburban Classic on March 23 at Oakton High School.

the same team with [Centreville point guard] Jenna [Green] and all them, it's a new feel, but I liked it."

Madison senior Katie Kerrigan has also been working hard, but in a different sport. After the Madison girls' basketball team lost to Stonewall Jackson in the region semifinals on Feb. 27, Kerrigan transitioned to her primary sport of lacrosse, which she will play at Ohio State University. On Sunday, she was back on the hardwood as a member of the West all-stars.

"It was definitely a lot of fun playing with the best players in the region," Kerrigan said. "It's definitely a little hard because I haven't touched a basketball in three weeks. It was fun. It was a great experience. I got to play with a lot of my close friends. It was a great way to end my high school career."

Kerrigan scored six points, played aggressive defense and got to play for Coach Stone one more time.

"It was fun," Stone said of coaching Kerrigan in the all-star game. "She's just a workhorse. You don't really see many of those. ... I turned to the girls on the bench

and I'm like, 'I would hate for her to have to guard me.' And they were like, 'it's awful."

THE EAST ALL-STARS led by as many as 22 points, when West Springfield's Amy Berglund scored to give the team a 76-54 advantage in the fourth quarter. Berglund finished with 10 points. She was one of four East players to reach double figures, and one of seven to score at least eight points.

Samantha Porter (Mount Vernon/Christopher Newport) and Amber Bryson (Lee) each scored 10 points for the East all-stars. Tykera Carter (T.C. Williams) finished with nine points, while Michelle Noel (Wakefield) and Tatianna Torres (Edison) each had eight. Caitlyn Mandela (Lake Braddock) and De'Ja Jeanpierre (Mount Vernon/Barton College) each had four points for the East, and Angie Schedler (T.C. Williams) had three.

For the West all-stars, Centreville's Green finished with 13 points and earned team MVP honors. Arnelle Collins (Freedom) scored 12 points and Alexia Johnson (Broad Run) had nine. Kayla Hix (Stonewall Jackson) and Bailey Dufrene (Osbourn) each had one point. Freedom's Nicole Lubovich also competed for the West team. Centreville's Katie Blumer was a member of the West all-stars but sat out due to injury.

Lewis, who coached Edison to its second consecutive region championship this season, said allowing players to have fun was a priority, but she takes pride in winning.

"Absolutely," she said. "I hate to lose."

There was a 3-point shootout prior to the main event, which Berglund won with nine points in the final round. Dufrene produced a final-round score of eight, while Prock and Green each had a score of seven.

Berglund put up 19 points in the first round.

"My heart was racing, I don't know why," Berglund said. "I was pretty nervous. It was fun. I felt like I was in the NBA all-star [shootout]. My legs got tired in the second round, that's why my score dropped so much, but it was fun."

Langley Girl's Lacrosse Opens Season With a Strong Win Against McLean

The Langley girls' lacrosse team started its 2014 season under a new coach, Rebecca Watkins, with a win over cross town rival McLean, 19-8 on March 20.

Nine different players scored goals, led by senior co-captain Lauren Clubb (3 goals and 1 assist), junior Julia Byrne (3 goals and 1 assist), freshman Becca Bair (3 goals), sophomore Halle Duenkel (2 goals and 3 assists), senior Katherine Gallo (2 goals and 1 assist), sophomore Morgan Kuligowski (2 goals and 1 assist), junior Nicole Lee (2 goals), junior co-captain Aubrey Zarella (1 goal and 2 assists) and freshman Anna Hofgard (1 goal and 2 assists). Freshman goalie Megan O'Hara had a strong game with 11 saves.

Langley reached the state finals each of the last two seasons, but enters the 2014 season with many new starters. The Saxons are captained this year by se-

niors Clubb and Jordan Simonides, and junior Zarella. Coach Watkins, a former Westfield High School

lacrosse star, recently took over the coaching reigns from longtime coach Richard DeSomma after a two-year stint as an assistant coach at Shenandoah University.

"I see a deep and talented team, and am excited to be able to work with these girls to achieve their true potential," Watkins said. "The McLean game demonstrated that we have a balanced attack, and I look forward to more successful games as the girls come together as a team."

Langley improved to 2-0 with a 10-9 victory against Centreville on March 24.

Next week will be a real test for Langley with games against Loudoun Valley, Fairfax and Oakton.



Photo by Craig Sterbutzel/The Connection

Langley junior Bethany Bacso fires a shot during a March 20 game against McLean.

SPORTS





Duenkel Committed to Play Lacrosse for JMU

Great Falls resident Halle Duenkel, a sophomore at Langley High School, has verbally committed to play Division I lacrosse for nationally-ranked James Madison University. Duenkel was a second-team all-district selection in lacrosse for Langley as a freshman in 2013, and made all-district in field hockey in the fall. Duenkel also plays for the Capital Lacrosse Club 2016 Blue team and made the high school MVP team for the 2012 Vail Lacrosse Shootout.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Page 9

ing violation appeal and special permit process, are depicted as mean people who want to keep the stables shut

We ask you to please consider how you would feel if this were taking place in your residential neighborhood.

Sara Downs

Great Falls

(On behalf of Falls Manors and Blacks Hill Road residents directly impacted by the path of the business traffic and activi-

Taking Exception on 'Citizens Involvement'

To the Editor:

I'm not sure I understand the letter from Eric Knudsen ("GFCA Appeals for Greater Citizens Involvement," Great Falls Connection, March 19-25, 2014). He seems to suggest that if more people attended the

meetings of the Great Falls Citizens Association, we could have prevented the ridiculous projects such as the narrowing of Walker Road from five lanes to two, walkways to nowhere that were not shoveled all winter, or the speed-traps on Georgetown Pike. He erroneously indicates that previous letters in the Connection "complain about the lack of public notice," when in reality they reflect the futility of participation in groups that know best. I have not been able to find a single resident or business person who thinks these projects were a good idea, yet Mr. Knudsen identifies a person who is no longer in business as "among the first" to support the Walker Road Diet Plan. Maybe his customers were stopped by the speed-traps on Georgetown Pike. Some of us have been waiting over 30 years for walking trails from the Center to the Parks in Great Falls, while the GFCA focused on a different set of priorities.

> Gene Phillip Great Falls

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Another **Milestone**



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

March 30, 2014. My age 59 and a half (9/30/54 is my date of birth). The age at which money deposited into an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) can be withdrawn without incurring a 10 percent earlywithdrawal penalty from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Not that I'm retiring. I am remembering though when this cancer-centric life of mine began.

I was diagnosed – in person – on February 27, 2009. Coincidentally around the time of the year when I contribute to my/our previous calendar year's IRA. On that fateful February day, I was age 54 and nearly one half, approximately five years away from having penalty-free access to my own "qualified" money. Having just received a "13 months to two years" prognosis by my oncologist, decision-making on subjects A-Z and/or everything in between from the sublime to the ridiculous – was challenging at best, and practically impossible at worst. Throw in a time consideration - such as the future - to factor into your planning, and topsy-turvy becomes turvy-

Now complicate the process further by introducing financial issues - past, present and future – along with the incredible uncertainty of a totally unexpected terminal diagnosis (stage IV, non-small cell lung cancer, NSCLC) and you have inaction, inattentiveness and insecurity overwhelming you at every step - and at every stagger, too; physically and emotionally.

As awkward and unfamiliar as this experience was at the time, I recall pondering the merit of investing money then that I would have limited access to until later, five years later in fact (without penalty that is). I mean, who knew/knows what expenses I might incur during my treatment? Fortunately I had health insurance, but considering co-pays, deductibles, "reasonable and customary"-type reimbursements leaving a balance to be borne by yours truly, alternative medicines/treatment options available (likely a total out-of-pocket cost), home health care, caregivers, loss of employment/income and miscellaneous expenses I was too clueless and uneducated to even contemplate and prepare for, and once again, you have potential trouble at every turn. Thinking positively and maintaining a good sense of humor can only keep so many wolves at bay. At some point - or certainly you think so, you are going to have to pay the piper, figuratively and most

definitely, literally. Still, Í remember thinking even then, in the haze of this terrible diagnosis/set of unbelievable circumstances, that if I didn't act/live as if I had a future, I likely wouldn't have one. But five years seemed like an eternity, and given my prognosis, didn't seem like time I should necessarily plan for. After all, my doctor had suggested that perhaps I "take that vacation I had always dreamed of."

Well, here I am, five years later, having invested every year in my/our IRA, still alive and extraordinarily lucky to be so. In truth, given the facts and feelings I was presented with in late February, 2009, I didn't think I'd live to see this day. But I have. And even though I'm not retiring and not needing to withdraw any funds – prematurely or otherwise – from my IRA, March 30, 2014 is a date, to me, worth acknowledging. Having lived this long, I suppose it's time to pick another date – in the future. If I don't plan for it, I likely won't get there.

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

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Schools

FCPS Students Win Awards at **History Day Competition**

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) won nine first place awards at the regional competition for National History Day, held recently at Mount Vernon High School. The two best entries in each category and in each age division have qualified to compete in the Virginia History Day contest on Saturday, April 26, in Williamsburg.

First place winners included:

- ❖ Ian Suzuki and Justin Shaw of Langley High School in Senior Group Documentary for "The Rights of the Quebecois.
- ❖ Basra Bashir of Mount Vernon High School in Individual Website for "Children Without Childhood."
- ❖ Jonathan Montgomery of West Springfield High School in Senior Historical Paper for "Geneva Convention: Responsibilities of the State Protecting the Rights of Prisoners of War.'
- ♦ Abdullah Choudhury of West Springfield High School in Senior Individual Exhibit for "The Role of Japanese-Americans in World War II."
- ❖ Glynnis Farleigh and Alexandra Kraus of West Springfield High School in Senior Group Website for "Rights and Responsibilities of German Citizens During World War II."
- * Zainab Calcuttawala and Swetha Kota of Westfield High School in Senior Group Exhibit for "Miep Gies Fights for Rights."
- ❖ Maisha Hoque and Raisa Hoque of Westfield High School in Senior Group Performance for "Akbar the Great: How a Mughal Used His Rights to Fulfill His Responsibilities.
- Hayley Seal of Westfield High School in Senior Individual Performance for "The Louisiana Pur-
- chase Song." ❖ David Sohn and Andrew Yoon of Lorton Station Elementary School in Junior Group Exhibit for "George Washington's Proclamation of Neutrality in 1793: Rights and Responsibilities of the Newly Independent U.S. Foreign Policy."

Sohn and Yoon also won the George Washington Leadership Prize, sponsored by Mount Vernon, and the first place Citizenship History Award, sponsored by the Virginia Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. Caleb Danen and Chloe Rutley of Lorton Station Elementary School won the second place Citizen History Award, sponsored by the Virginia Society of the Sons of the American

Westfield High School student Monica Rudolph won the Newseum First Amendment Freedoms Award, sponsored by the Newseum, for her Senior Individual Exhibit, "Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, Leading the Way for Women's Voting Rights." Whitman Middle School student Anna Jackson won the Newseum First Amendment Freedoms Award in the Junior Division for her Junior Individual Performance, "Ooh, What Should I Wear?

Second place winners included Emily Vang of Langley High School for Senior Individual Exhibit; Brooke Scutt, Ashley Sowell, and Ivania Canizalez of Mount Vernon High School for Senior Group Documentary; Alison Gray and Eva Du of West Springfield High School for Senior Group Exhibit; Christina Starling, Jonathan Hayes, Gari Jimenez-Lugo, and Stephen Scott of West Springfield High School for Senior Group Performance; Catherine Elwell of West Springfield High School for Senior Historical Paper; Celina Paudel of Westfield High School for Senior Individual Performance; and Ranai Kazi of Whitman Middle School for Junior Individual Exhibit.

Third place winners were Flannery Jamison of Madison High School, Senior Individual Documentary; Molly McClelland of Mount Vernon High School, Senior Individual Performance; Robert Marchibroda and Nicholas Phan of Robinson Secondary School, Senior Group Exhibit; Aya Khalafalla of West Springfield High School, Senior Individual Web Site; Brittany Branch of West Springfield High School, Senior Individual Exhibit Jisun Lee, Sarah Lim, and Asmita Shah of Westfield High School, Senior Group Documentary; Sara Sturm, Kellie Cleveland, and Skye Koutstaal of Westfield High School, Senior Group Website; Shaleen Haque of West Springfield High School, Senior Historical Paper; and Caleb Danen and Chloe Rutley of Lorton Station Elementary School, Junior Group Exhibit.



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