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East All-Stars Win Suburban Classic

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PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION



Lake Braddock senior Caitlyn Mandela scored four points for the East all-stars during the 10th Suburban Classic on March 23 at Oakton High School.

Blizzard of Spending

NEWS, PAGE 3

Hosting Students from Japan

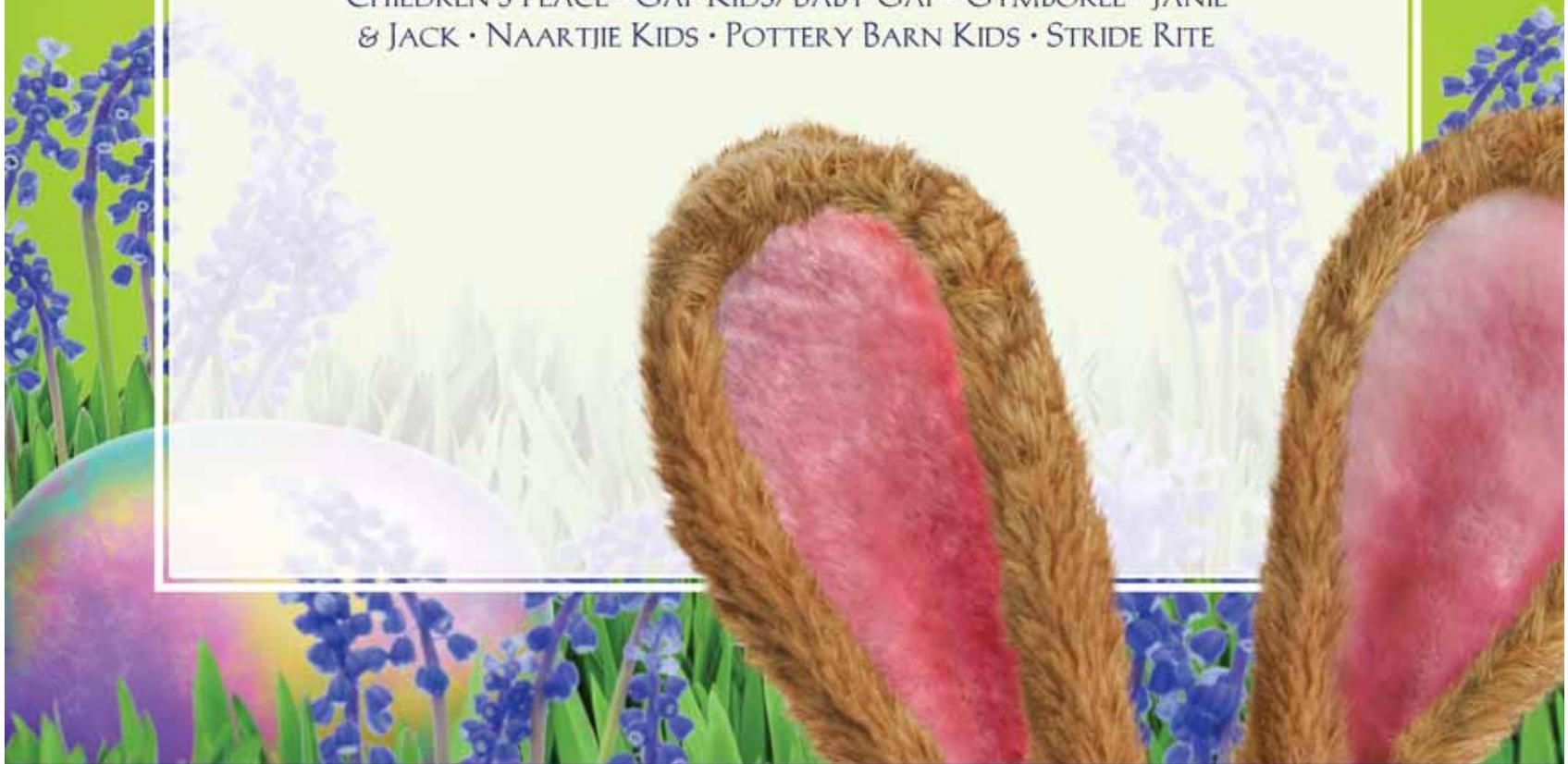
NEWS, PAGE 4

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Potholes on North Pitt Street in Old Town Alexandria.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEE POPE/THE CONNECTION

Blizzard of Spending

Polar vortex sends financial chill through local governments.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

The unusually hard winter has created a blizzard of spending for local governments across Northern Virginia — bursting 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 of 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 into town.

"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."

Budget Competition

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

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

Two 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 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

SEE TAXES, PAGE 14

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.



PHOTOS BY JANELLE GERMANOS/THE CONNECTION



Student representatives from South Lakes, Hayfield and Lake Braddock accept a gift from Japanese exchange students at an event celebrating the KAKEHASHI Project at Hayfield Secondary School.

Safiyyah Nadeem, a senior at Lake Braddock Secondary School, poses with Japanese exchange students Natsuki Tsuchimoto and Ayano Ito. Nadeem visited Japan last summer, and this week hosted Tsuchimoto at her house.

Fairfax County Hosts Students from Japan

23 students also visited Japan last summer.

BY JANELLE GERMANOS
THE CONNECTION

Last summer, 23 students studying Japanese at Lake Braddock, Hayfield and South Lakes High Schools received a full scholarship to visit Japan for ten days as part of the KAKEHASHI Project, a cultural exchange program that aims to connect students from Japan and the U.S.

After an exciting and educational trip, students from these Fairfax schools hosted Japanese students visiting the U.S. during the students' trip in March.

To celebrate the exchange of culture and friendship, the three schools hosted an event to celebrate the project at Hayfield Secondary School on March 24.

The Japanese exchange students, who attend Kawagoe High School in Mie Prefecture of Japan, shared lessons on Japanese culture to Fairfax County students, parents and community members. Audience members learned about Japanese food, literature, entertainment, and more.

Fairfax County students also reflected on their experiences in Japan.

"It was a lot of fun," said Safiyyah Nadeem, a senior at Lake Braddock Secondary School. "I want to go back."

Nadeem, along with several other students, hosted an exchange student at her house during the Japanese students' visit to Virginia.

Natsuki Tsuchimoto, a 17-year-old junior from Japan, stayed with Nadeem, and said it was the best part of her trip.

"I love my host family," Tsuchimoto said.

Tsuchimoto and her friend Ayano Ito said they have enjoyed their time in the U.S., especially visiting the Farmers Market in Seattle and the monuments in Washington, D.C.

They've also noticed the differences between U.S. and Japanese culture.

"The houses here are huge," Tsuchimoto



Fairfax County Public Schools students from Lake Braddock, Hayfield and South Lakes pose with students from Japan at an event celebrating the KAKEHASHI Project, which has allowed these students to learn about each other's culture.



Gregory Jones, the chair of Fairfax County Public Schools World Languages, speaks at a celebration celebrating the KAKEHASHI Project at Hayfield.

said.

The Japanese students said they love American food, especially hamburgers, sandwiches, steak and French fries, and love

Students who visited Japan in summer 2013

❖ Hayfield Secondary School: Michael Chong, Colin Moore, Allison Loyola, Virginia Shih, Gerrica Asihene, Catherine Kenol;

❖ South Lakes High School: Zachary McIntyre, Paul Fertitta, Barbara Acosta, Jessica Lin, Melanie Anderson, Christina Bohnet;

❖ Lake Braddock Secondary School: Dennis Nguyen, Bryce Ahn, Jeong Min (Mary) Choi, Safiyyah Nadeem, Min Ju (Sarah) Kwon, Hannah Moon, Aysha Benomran, Melissa Pampel, Emma Hurst, Annalise Deppmeier, Emely Pascual.

❖ Teachers: Lake Braddock: Keiko Abrams; South Lakes: Adam Podell; Hayfield: Kyoko Vaughan.

talking with their host families and students.

"It's a lot of fun being able to talk and do stuff together," Nadeem said.

The KAKEHASHI Project has allowed students from 28 high schools and nine post-secondary institutions to visit Japan since it began in April 2013.

The schools in the U.S. then host students from Japan, who visit two major cities and stay with an American family from one of

the schools participating in the program.

"It's very impressive to see students come to another land and speak in a target language," said Gregory Jones, the chair of Fairfax County Public Schools World Languages program.

"That is exactly what we are trying to do with our students in terms of teaching them and giving them the opportunity to learn other languages and interact culturally appropriate within the target language and within the culture."

Adam Podell, Kyoko Vaughan, and Keiko Abrams, Japanese teachers from South Lakes, Hayfield and Lake Braddock, accompanied the Fairfax County students on their trip to Japan.

"These are all students from very strong Japanese language programs," Abrams said. "After they went on the trip, they are studying completely differently."

They are studying much more than before. A lot of them want to major in it in college."

The KAKEHASHI Project has set a goal of sending 47 secondary schools and 24 post-secondary institutions to Japan by the end of March 2015.

Compassion Award for County Animal Shelter

The Virginia Federation of Humane Societies has selected the state's top animal shelters and programs that made a difference in the animal welfare in 2013. And the Fairfax County Animal Shelter received the Compassion Award for its demonstration of strong leadership and significant progress

toward reducing euthanasia of healthy and treatable dogs and cats in the community. Deborah Griggs, a board member of the Virginia Federation of Humane Societies, presented the award. Last year, Fairfax County was the largest jurisdiction in the U.S. with an animal-placement rate above 90 percent.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

(From left) are Lee Ann Shenefiel, business operations manager; Shelter Director Tawny Hammond; Kelly Willet, animal care operations manager; and Kristen Auerbach, communications and outreach director.

FAITH NOTES

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

Mothers and daughters, come together to enjoy Bingo, crafts, games, refreshments and more. Bring your favorite teacup and wear your best tea party hat for special contest categories. The cost is \$25/couple with an extra \$5 for each additional sibling.

The Tea is Saturday, April 5, from 2-4 p.m. at Burke United Methodist Church. There will also be a silent auction with a portion of the proceeds to benefit SHARE - Share Her Annual Real Expenses - a Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital program that provides funding for Girl Scout campsites, leader training and financial aid.

For reservations contact Sandy Latta at 703-495-0063 or slatta@fourthwave.com. Reservations close March 29.

The Cancer Treatment Centers of America, sponsored by the Cancer Support Team, Ministry of Greater Little Baptist Church, Fairfax, will present "Restore: The Journey Toward Self Forgiveness & Physical Health" on Saturday, April 5, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Greater Little Zion Baptist Church, 10185 Zion Drive, Fairfax. This is a free event. To RSVP, call the church at 703-764-9111 or email Cancer Support Team Ministry at cstm@glzbc.org

The speaker will be Rev. Dr. Michael Barry author of the Forgiveness Project and Director of Pastoral Care at Cancer Treatment Centers of America in Philadelphia, Pa.

The Effects of Mass Incarceration: A Public Forum on Criminal Justice Sentencing Reform will be held on Sunday, April 6, 2 - 4 p.m. at Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church, 10125 Lakehaven Drive, Burke. The panelists include state Sen. Dave Marsden, the Sentencing Project's Nazgol Ghandnoosh, Fairfax's Deputy County Executive David Rohrer. They will engage these concerns: the United States has more people in jail than any nation in the history of the world. Unintended consequences of this Mass Incarceration are especially devastating to poor communities of color. Young African-American Men are more likely to go to jail than to college. Many drug offenders are discriminated against in housing, voting and education after they have served their sentences. How do we minimize the human costs of the Drug War and Mass Incarceration and fix this crisis? For more info got to www.accotinkuuc.org - or call 703-503-4579 and ask for Reverend Scott Sammler-Michael

SEE FAITH. PAGE 14

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Walk, Candlelight Vigil Honors Crime Victims

The free event to kick off National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 6-12.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County remembers local people who've been victims of crimes. And on Sunday, April 6, at Fairfax Corner, they'll be honored via the second annual 5K Walk and Candlelight Vigil.

The free event, in front of the movie theater at 4100 Monument Corner Drive in the Fairfax Corner shopping center, kicks off National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 6-12.

Each April, law-enforcement agencies, along with organizations and communities, join together to observe this week. The goal is to promote victims' rights and honor crime victims and the people who work tirelessly advocating on their behalf.

Fairfax County Police Chief Edwin C. Roessler Jr. and Commonwealth's Attorney Ray Morrogh will welcome attendees and give opening remarks at 5:30 p.m. First, though, check-in and a resource fair featuring more than 15 vendors from local and national service providers will be held from 4:30-5:30 p.m.

The participants include Dr. Will Marling, executive director, National Organization for Victim Assistance. In addition, Steve Shillingford and Peter Khan

of the E and Me band will perform live jazz.

The walk will begin at 6 p.m., followed by the candlelight vigil honoring the victims, from 7-7:30 p.m. For more information and to register, go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NCVRW2014>. The first 200 people registered will receive free T-shirts.

The walk and vigil are being hosted by the Victims Services Section of the county Police Department and the Fairfax County Law Enforcement Foundation. And the community is invited to join the professionals who support local victims of homicide, trauma, sexual and domestic violence, child physical and sexual abuse, stalking, human trafficking and suicide as they walk together.

A related event during that week will be held Thursday, April 10, from 11 a.m.-9 p.m., at The Greene Turtle Restaurant, 3950 University Drive, Suite 209, in the City of Fairfax. Sponsored by the Fairfax County Law Enforcement Foundation, it's a fundraiser for the Victim Services Section so it can continue meeting the immediate needs of crime victims.

Those eating lunch or dinner that day at The Green Turtle will have 20 percent of the gross proceeds from their meal donated to the cause. To participate, people must download an event flyer at www.fairfaxfoundation.org, print it and present it to their server when they order.

To learn more about the Police Department's Victim Services section, visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/services/victim-services.htm>.



Some of the participants in last year's 5K Walk and Candlelight Vigil.

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'Goal Is To Spot Kids in Crisis'

Police, others take suicide prevention training.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Although there have been four recent incidents of teen suicides in Fairfax County, the Police Department has planned to offer Suicide Awareness and Intervention Training for its officers since October 2013.

So police and others who work with youth recently took a two-day course at the Criminal Justice Academy in Chantilly to learn how they can help prevent people at immediate risk of suicide from following through.

"This is a collaboration between school social workers, counselors, [police] School Resource Officers [SRO] and school security," said police Lt. Christian Quinn, school liaison commander. "SROs are the liaison between the Police Department and the school system."

"This training will give the officers some perspective and help them establish relationships with these other groups because they see the kids first," he continued. "The goal is to spot kids in crisis and provide them with meaningful intervention before they make tragic choices."

The workshop focused on small-group discussions and skills that could help them save lives. Officers learned how to recognize a call for help, reach out and offer support and connect people with the particular resources they need.

"This is the means to identify kids struggling and maybe not voicing it," said Quinn. "Not everybody who's depressed commits suicide, and not everybody who's suicidal expresses this feeling. So we try to see what subtle behaviors they do in advance so we can provide proactive measures."

For example, it helps if police, social workers or counselors can receive a peer referral because of something disturbing or unsettling that a teen posted on social media. Then, said Quinn, "We can put in a safety plan and try some steps to help [that teen]."

SROs get to know students and their friends personally.

So often, said Quinn, "The kids will go to the SRO and say, 'I'm concerned about So and So.' If it prevents even one suicide, it's worth the effort."

He said teens often exhibit some telltale behavior signaling they're having some type of problems. Some of the warning signs to



Police Lt. Christian Quinn, school liaison commander, discusses the new suicide awareness and intervention training.

BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

look for are behavioral changes; threatening messages; and a change in grades, friends and/or activities outside of school.

That's why, said Quinn, "Parental involvement is paramount. If parents see changes in their kids, they can bring it to the attention of the SRO."

They and the school social workers and counselors are the first net to provide safety and catch something.

Then there can be some intervention and kids can get help, such as a referral for long-term care."

About 30 people signed up for the mid-March class at the Criminal Justice Academy.

They were evenly divided between SROs, school security, and school social workers, clinicians and counselors.

Master trainers from the ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) program - offered by a company called LivingWorks - provided the instruction. Also sponsoring the course was the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services; it was funded by a grant.

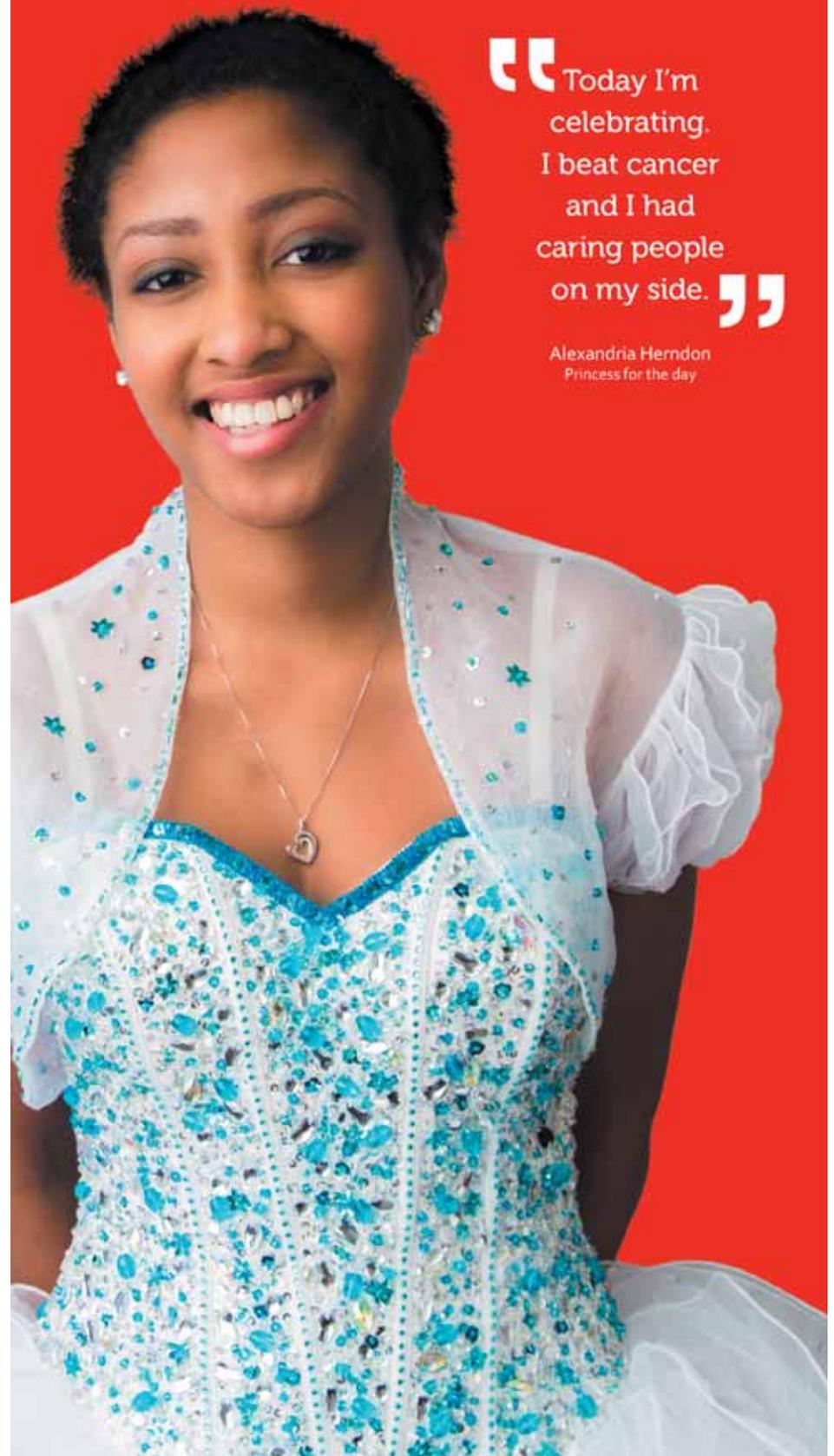
According to ASIST, as much as 6 percent of the population has serious thoughts of suicide. In Fairfax County, there were 94 suicides in 2012 and 95 in 2013. So far this year, there have been 19 — and 15 of them were teenagers.

"Suicidal persons find all manner of means to accomplish the act," said Quinn. "They don't choose one way over the other. We take the issue very seriously, and we know this training is critical so the folks on the front line will have a better chance to do something productive to keep kids safe."



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.



“Today I’m celebrating. I beat cancer and I had caring people on my side.”

Alexandria Herndon
Princess for the day

Challenging Budgets

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

Northern 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: "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 percent.

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 budgets.

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

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 environment.

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.

EDITORIAL

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 to benefit.

Meanwhile, Arlington FY 2015 tax rate public hearing is March 27 at 7 p.m. More on Arlington's budget: <http://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 Fairfax County Budget, <http://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

Small Farmers Need Clean Water

BY MARIETTE HIU NEWCOMB AND KIMBERLY WILLIAMS

Northern Virginia's small farmers know the importance of keeping the water that we all depend on clean. They worry that polluted water could contaminate their crops — the fruits and vegetables that are supposed to keep people nourished and healthy. Local farmers are doing their part to reduce runoff pollution into the streams that feed into the Potomac River.

But the Potomac River and other waterways across Virginia remain at risk.

The Clean Water Act has been helping protect waterways across the country from pollution for the past 40 years. Through its protections, we've made huge progress in cleaning up Virginia's waterways, giving even more Virginians the opportunity to fish and swim in rivers like the Potomac. But if polluters like Big Ag and Big Oil have their way, that progress will stop here.

Polluter-led lawsuits have opened up

huge loopholes in the Clean Water Act.

These loopholes leave 57 percent of Virginia's streams and many of its wetlands at risk of unchecked pollution. To make matters worse, these are the same waterways that feed and filter waterways like the Potomac River and, on their own, provide the drinking water for 2 million Virginians.

The effects of these loopholes on Virginia could be huge. The health of our families, our local economy and the ecosystem depend on our waterways being clean and safe.

And our farms need clean water to grow healthy food for our communities. No one should be allowed to dump waste into the waterways that provide our communities with drinking water and a place to visit and enjoy. We all have a stake in clean water, and we know from the days before the Clean Water Act that when polluters dump into our streams and pave over our wetlands, we all suffer.

Virginia's small farmers have a particularly large stake in clean water and would feel the impacts

of an impaired water source. And because of that, many small farmers in Virginia take great care to be stewards of their land and our waterways. But without adequate protections to all our waterways, we can't ensure that our water will remain clean enough for drinking, swimming, or watering our crops.

Fortunately, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has the power to close these loopholes and help ensure that all Virginia's waterways are safe for future generations to enjoy just like we do today.

For over a decade, the nation's biggest polluters have been fighting tooth and nail to keep the EPA from fixing these loopholes and letting the cops on the environmental beat protect waterways like the Potomac River. But this fall, the EPA took the first big step toward protecting all of Virginia's waterways when it initiated the process to finally close these loopholes. This is great news for people across Virginia, especially small farmers. If the EPA continues to move forward and fixes the Clean Water Act, our

waterways could soon again have the protections they deserve.

Whether we're fishing, swimming, watering crops, or just turning on the tap, the health of our waterways is critical to our way of life. All our waterways should be clean enough that we can swim in them without risking getting sick and fish from them without fearing the catch is too contaminated to eat. And the water that farmers give to their livestock should come from protected sources. Whether we're farmers, entrepreneurs, local officials, or ordinary families, we all need the EPA to move forward and fix the Clean Water Act now to ensure that places like the Potomac River are protected now and for future generations.

Mariette Hiu Newcomb is the owner of Potomac Vegetable Farms, a local farm in Northern Virginia that specializes in growing crops without synthetic fertilizers or pesticides. Their vegetables, herbs, and cut flowers are available at farmers markets, our two on-farm roadside stands, and through their 550-member CSA.

Kimberly Williams is the Clean Water Associate with Environment Virginia, a citizen based advocacy organization.

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LETTERS

County's Urge to Spend

To the Editor:
The power to tax is the power to destroy.
When the economy was booming Fairfax County spent (and spent) and most of us ere too busy to take as much notice as needed. Now many years later the county urge to spend remains high as if the tax payers have unlimited resources. My tax rate, based on the assessment letter recently received

has a rate in the order of 12 percent in spite of the letter's claim that the increase is (only) 9 percent.
Hopefully the Board of Supervisors will, with taxpayer input, do a line by line review of the draft budget and get the fat out before it's too late.

Bill Finberg
Burke

A Short Walk to Save a Life

To the Editor:
As a kidney transplant recipient, I know firsthand how kidney disease impacts a family and how a little knowledge can go a long way.
I ignored the symptoms of my failing kidneys for three years. I chalked them up to stress, poor diet and lack of sleep. One day I passed out, was rushed to the hospital, and immediately put on dialysis. In the blink of an eye, my family nearly lost me.
This spring, I will be walking with kidney patients, organ donors, transplant recipients, family, friends and co-workers to help raise awareness of the 700,000 individuals and their families af-

ected by kidney disease in the National Capital Area. Join me on Sunday, April 13 at the Northern Virginia Kidney Walk [in Reston Town Center] or on Saturday, May 17 at the National Capital Area Kidney Walk.
Funds raised at the National Kidney Foundation serving the National Capital Area Kidney Walks go directly to vital programs that help fight kidney disease through prevention, advocacy and education. Take the first step, visit www.kidneywalk.org.

Daryle McGhee
Assistant Vice President, First Citizens Bank

A SENSE OF PLACE

Westminster at Lake Ridge—a community small enough to know your neighbors, yet big enough to support exceptional services and amenities. A place to enjoy nature, visit a nearby quaint historic village or experience the excitement and culture of our nation's capital. You'll discover what so many people have found...a home with a true sense of "place".

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Matthew Poggi, MD, Medical Director



SPRING FUN 2014

CALENDAR

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



Get ready, the circus is coming to town! Join in on the fun with Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey as they present **Built to Amaze Circus**, beginning April 9 at George Mason University's Patriot Center.

yard sale from 4-8 p.m. March 28 in the Green Acres Center cafeteria: children's clothes, toys, bikes, computers, furniture and household linens. Please, no adult-size clothing or cloth covered sofas. Proceeds will benefit the city's 2014 Independence Day celebration to be held July 4. For information, call 703-385-7949.

Lakehaven Drive, Burke, Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church. Join poets from around our region as they compete for prize money; hosted by Regie Cabico and Sarah D. Lawsons from Busboys and Poets. www.accotinkuuc.org or 703-503-4579.

SUNDAY/ APRIL 6

Potomac Ensemble. 4 p.m., 6509 Sydenstricker Road, Burke, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church. Enjoy a group of 10 of the DC area's finest professional singers, in a program of great music for 5-part choir. foma_standrews@verizon.net.

In the Bunker with the Vice President on 9/11. 7 p.m. Stacy Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. The lecture is free and open to all. Book signing and refreshments.

Seminar: "Feeding Hungry Roses." 2-4 p.m. Merrifield Garden Center, 12101 Lee Highway, Fairfax. Learn how to feed your roses for beautiful blooms.

TUESDAY/APRIL 8

Slam Poetry Cafe. 6-8 p.m. Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce Street, Springfield. Slam poetry is the art of performance poetry. Performers, come share your original or previously published pieces. Email slampoetrycafe@gmail.com with your name and poem.

WEDNESDAY/APRIL 9 - SUNDAY/APRIL 20

Ringling Bros. and Barnum &

Bailey Presents Built to Amaze Circus. GMU Patriot Center, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Tickets: \$15-\$30. For more information and showtimes visit, www.ticketmaster.com.

SUNDAY/APRIL 27

Jeffrey Siegel, "Mistresses and Masterpieces." 7 p.m., George Mason University Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, MS 2F5, Fairfax. The pianist performs music inspired by composers' major love interests. \$19-\$38, Mason ID permits 1 free ticket on April 15. cfa.gmu.edu.

Young Artists Musicales. 6 p.m., George Mason University Center for the Arts lobby, 4400 University Drive, MS 2F5, Fairfax. Piano students and winners of the Northern Virginia Music Teachers Association Honors Recitals perform short pieces. Free admission. cfa.gmu.edu.

ONGOING

Workhouse Farmers Market. 3-6 p.m., at the Workhouse, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. Every Thursday on the quad is a producer-only market for discerning shoppers featuring locally grown fruits and vegetables, locally raised meats and poultry and local foods from breads to salsas and sausages. www.smartmarkets.org.

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

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

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

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

Join Jewish War Veterans of the USA. The Burke Post E 100 at 5712 Walnut Wood, Burke, invites Jewish veterans and service members to join. 703-209-5925.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 26- SUNDAY/MARCH 30

6th Annual Used Book Sale. Hours March 26 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.; March 27. 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.; March 28 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.; and March 30 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Geshur Jewish Day School, 4800 Mattie Moore Court, Fairfax. Over 10,000 neatly sorted gently read books will be offered for sale at prices from \$0.50 to \$2.50. On March 30, all books are \$5 a bag.

FRIDAY/MARCH 28- SATURDAY/MARCH 29

Children's Consignment Sale. Friday: 9 a.m. - 8 p.m.; Saturday: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. At Cameron United Methodist Church, 3130 Franconia Road, Alexandria. Make some extra cash by selling your children's outgrown (but in good condition) clothes, equipment/toys, and maternity wear while helping other parents outfit their growing children. Sellers receive 60% of the sales price (seller determined) and the UMW receives 40% to support Local and National charities. Become a seller, call 703-971-7957 or email CUMC.UMW.CCS@gmail.com by March 23.

First Robotics Competition Greater D.C. Regional. 9:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. Patriot Center, George Mason University, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Student-built remote controlled robots face off in a two-day tournament at GMU's Patriot Center. Winners qualify for World Robotics Championship. www.dc-first.org

SATURDAY/MARCH 29

Signature English Tea. 2 - 4 p.m. Pohick Church, 9301 Richmond Hwy., Lorton, VA, at corner of U.S. 1 & Telegraph Road, Lorton. Colonial Living History Program, 18th century music by flautist and harpsichordist. Silent auction. Golden Dove Gift Shop open noon - 1:45 p.m. Docent-led tours of church begin 1 p.m. Cost \$40.00 for adults, \$25.00 for children age 12 and under. 703-497-5927 or helenandjeff@verizon.net.

Spring Bazaar. 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. Sydenstricker United Methodist Church, 8508 Hooes Road, Springfield. Come shop from outstanding local artists and artisans, crafters, vintage & collectible dealers and consultants representing a wide variety of products. Our youth will be having a car wash! Homemade bake goods will be featured. www.sydenstrickermc.org

Indoor Yard Sale. 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. Green Acres Center, 4401 Sideburn Road, Fairfax. The Independence Day Celebration Committee will host a yard sale and seeks donated items. These items will be accepted for the

BULLETIN BOARD

SATURDAY/MARCH 29

Dog Adoption. 12-3 p.m. PETCO, Greenbriar Towncenter, 13053 Lee Jackson Memorial Highway, Fairfax. 703-817-9444 or for more info. visit hart90.org

SUNDAY/MARCH 30

Del. Eileen Filler-Corn (41st District - Burke, Fairfax, Fairfax Station, Springfield) will hold March office hours at Saxbys Coffee (10637 Braddock Rd, Fairfax), 3 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. No appointment necessary. Please drop by.



CONTRIBUTOR

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

Burke Historical Society Meeting. 4:30 p.m. Fellowship Hall at Abiding Presence Lutheran Church, 6304 Lee Chapel Road, Burke. We'll mark the end of winter with a look back at the Knickerbocker Snowstorm of 1922, as presented by Kevin Ambrose.

SATURDAY/ APRIL 5

Dog Adoption. 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Greenbriar Towncenter, 13053 Lee Jackson Memorial Hwy., Fairfax. Homeless Animals Rescue Team hosts this dog adoption event at PETCO. 703-817-9444 or hart90.org

ONGOING

Singers Wanted for the Celebration Singers. The women's show choir is interested in new talent to perform at various Northern

Virginia community sites. Practices are Wednesdays 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. in Burke. Contact Gayle Parsons, 703-644-4485 or email gparsons3@cox.net.

Online Scavenger Hunt. Visit Fairfax tasks those interested in becoming "citizen ambassadors" to the county (those informed on fun, creative weekend outings in the area) to find two Fairfax County Ambassador icons hidden throughout the fxva.com website in order to join the ambassador team; those who find all five hidden pins will receive a complimentary gift. www.fxva.com/online-ambassador.

Senior Fall Prevention Classes. 1:30-2:30 p.m., at the Woodlands Retirement Community, 4320 Forest Hill Drive, Fairfax. Tuesday and/or Thursday classes in a heated pool designed to work on balance and core

muscles for injury prevention. \$10. 703-667-9800.

American Red Cross CPR, First Aid and AED. Various times, at 2720 State Route 699, Suite 200, Fairfax. One-year certification, digital or print materials and continued education on Mondays through Thursday and Saturday. \$70-110. www.redcrossna.org.

Dementia Care Givers Support Groups. Various times, at Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5114 Twinbrook Road, Fairfax. The groups are for those caring for someone with dementia or for those interested in learning more about providing care giving to a person with a disorder that affects memory and cognition and may impact behavior and physical abilities. 703-451-8626 or Eileen.thompson1@gmail.com.

Ginger Costa-Jackson as Carmen and Dinyar Vania as Don Jose in Virginia Opera's production of "Carmen."



PHOTOS BY DAVID A. BELOFF/COURTESY OF VIRGINIA OPERA

'Carmen' Comes to Area

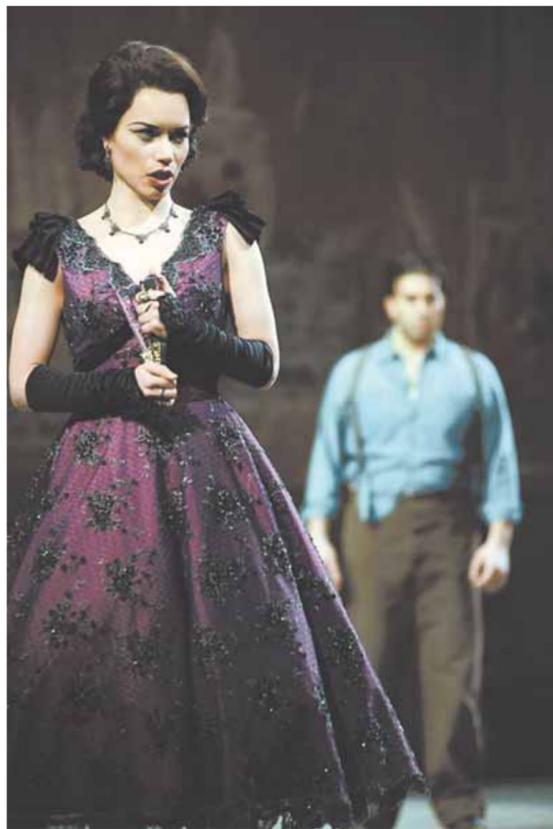
Virginia Opera brings "Carmen" to Center for the Arts.

By DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

Virginia 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 Jos and his ill-fated obsession with the alluring Carmen who tosses him aside for another man leading to jealous rage.

"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, 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."



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

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Paul H. Weisshaar, M.D.

will close his Gynecology practice on 4/30/2014



Invitation

For parents whose children are entering Kindergarten for the 2014/15 School Year

Kiddie Country Developmental Learning Center, 9601 Old Keene Mill Road, will be presenting an overview to assist those parents who are seeking a high quality educational kindergarten experience for their child(ren) on Thursday, April 10, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

This presentation will be conducted by Karen Duffy, Curriculum Specialist, and Tricia Daniels, Virginia Licensed Kindergarten teacher. Together Ms. Duffy and Ms. Daniels have a total of forty-four years of teaching experience between them and are eager to talk with you and answer any questions you may have.

Kiddie Country's Kindergarten program is highly recognized for its advanced curriculum and outstanding students who meet with great success in first grade and beyond. Come join us for a relaxed session that will fully describe the many outstanding attributes of this highly acclaimed curriculum and the reasons why Kiddie Country's Kindergarten is a "best choice" placement for your child.

No need for a sitter - bring your children!
Mad Science presentation! Treats, goodies, and fun!

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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

The 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 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 blue-



© Donald M. 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.

PHOTOS BY DONALD SWEIG



© Donald M. Sweig

Some Bluebells flower in delicate shades of pink and light blue. 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.

bells; 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/riverbend-park/>

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."

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Four level Regent model in Kings Park West. Easy walk to Robinson High School. Home features gleaming hardwood floors, three full baths that have been recently remodeled, four bedrooms, and full finished basement. Level backyard with access from the family room. Early occupancy available.



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Flight Trampoline Park, which just opened off of Fullerton Road in Springfield, is over 13,000 square feet of trampolines.



Dylan of Lorton enjoys some time on a trampoline at Flight Trampoline Park in Springfield.

PHOTOS BY JANELLE GERMANOS/THE CONNECTION

Flight Trampoline Park Opens in Springfield

Kids and adults welcome for spring fun.

BY JANELLE GERMANOS
THE CONNECTION

The area surrounding Interstate 95 off of Fullerton Road in Springfield isn't exactly known for a variety of activities for fun.

Filled with warehouses and industrial parks, the area has been in need of a fun activity for the whole family for some time now.

That's where Flight Trampoline Park comes in. With over 13,000 square feet of

trampolines, the new facility is fun for kids and adults.

The park just opened three weeks ago and already has generated a strong community interest.

"We have almost 10,000 Facebook fans," said Dusten Estes, co-owner of Flight Trampoline Park.

Estes, along with Cameron Gentry and Dustin Ward, opened the first Flight Trampoline Park location in Connecticut. Estes said that the location was successful, so they decided to look into opening more East

Coast locations.

"Trampoline parks are fairly new to the East Coast," Estes said.

Springfield was an optimal location because it has great demographics, and Estes says there isn't a lot of competition in the area in terms of trampoline parks.

Estes said the Springfield location is doing pretty well, and will be launching fitness classes in a couple weeks on April 5.

"The fitness classes include boot camp, high intensity and high calorie burning classes," Estes said.

In addition to open jump, which is priced

in half hour, hour and two hour sessions, Flight Trampoline Park is available for birthday parties, corporate events, fundraisers and sleepovers.

LivingSocial and Groupon are also offering deals tickets to Flight Trampoline Park.

Although Estes said Flight Trampoline Park targets kids, it is a fun place for adults as well.

Weekends are the busiest times at Flight Trampoline Park, although the Springfield location is open seven days a week.

More locations along the East Coast, including one in Chantilly, will be opening soon.

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Burke \$414,950

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Centerville/Centre Ridge \$334,950

Multiple Offers Received

Immac TH backing to common area w/ eat-in kit w/ granite cntns, SS appliances & walk-in pantry, fin walkout bsmt w/ full bath, deck, hot tub, fenced yard, Koi pond, dramatic MBR w/ vaulted ceilings & walk-in closet, MBA w/ granite cntns, new gas furnace, A/C & water htr, fresh paint & more.



Fairfax Sta/South Run \$799,950

Remodeled Kitchen & Baths

Mint condition col w/ 5BR, 3.5BA, dramatic fmlrym w/ cathedral clngs, remodeled kit w/ cherry cabs, tile splash, granite cntns & walk-in pantry, fin walkout bsmt, deck, quality new windows, fresh paint, fabulous remodeled MBA w/ double sinks w/ granite cntns & oversized tub & shower, sunny library, new HVAC & much more.



Springfield/Belmead So. Run \$924,950

Multiple Offers Received

Stunning Col w/ dramatic 2-story foyer & LvrM, library, lovely fmly rm w/ stone fireplace & custom built-ins, stone patio, composite deck, amazing fin walk-up bsmt w/ huge bar w/ granite counters, den/5thBR, bath, exercise rm + rec rm, MBR w/ tray ceiling & sitting rm & eat-in kitchen w/ maple cabinets & granite.

Kathleen Quintarelli
703-862-8808

See Interior Photos at:

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New CSA Pick-up location for Organic Produce

Great Harvest Bread Co is a new pick-up location for fresh organic produce. Full and half shares available. Sign-up for your share at <http://lancasterfarmfresh.com>

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Budget Competition

FROM PAGE 3

\$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. That’s 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.”

FAITH NOTES

FROM PAGE 5

Fairfax Baptist Temple, at the corner of Fairfax County Parkway and Burke Lake Roads, holds a bible study fellowship at 9 a.m. Sundays followed by a 10 a.m. worship service. Nursery care and children’s church also provided. 6401 Missionary Lane, Fairfax Station, 703-323-8100 or www.fbtministries.org.

The Guhyasamaja Buddhist Center, 10875 Main St., Fairfax City provides free classes to both newcomers and advanced practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism. The center emphasizes working with the mind and learning how to understand the workings of the mind, overcoming inner causes of suffering, while cultivating causes of happiness. Under the direction of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, the center is a place of study, contemplation and meditation. Visit <http://www.guhyasamaja.org> for more information.

Lord of Life Lutheran offers services at two locations, in Fairfax at 5114 Twinbrook Road and in Clifton at 13421 Twin Lakes Drive. Services in Fairfax are held on Saturdays at 5:30 p.m. and Sundays at 8:30 and 10 a.m. Services in Clifton are held on Sundays at 8:15 and 10:30 a.m. 703-323-9500 or www.Lordoflifeva.org.

First Baptist Church of Springfield offers Sunday school at 9:15 a.m., followed by a 10:30 a.m. worship service at 7300 Gary St., Springfield. 703-451-1500 or www.fbcspringfield.org.

Clifton Presbyterian Church, 12748 Richards Lane, Clifton, offers Sunday worship services at 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. Nursery care is provided. Christian education for all ages is at 9:45 a.m. 703-830-3175.

St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church, 6720 Union Mill Road, Clifton, conducts Sunday masses at 7:30 a.m., 8:45 a.m., 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. It also offers a Saturday vigil at 5:30 p.m. and a Thursday Latin mass at 7 p.m. 703-817-1770 or www.st-andrew.org.

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 8304 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield, offers casual worship services on Saturday evenings at 5:30 p.m. featuring contemporary music. More traditional services take place on Sunday mornings at 8:15 and 11 a.m. Sunday School is from 9:45-10:45 a.m. for children and adults. The church also offers discussion groups for adults. 703-451-5855 or www.poplcc.org.

Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, 8336 Carrleigh Parkway in Springfield, supports a Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) program on the first and third Wednesday of each month. Meetings are 9:30-11:30 a.m. at the church. All mothers and children are welcome. The program provides mothers an opportunity to get to know other mothers through discussions and craft activities. Register. 703-451-5320.

JCCNV Mother’s Circle program, for women who are not Jewish but are raising Jewish children. Free education in Jewish rituals, practices and values, while respecting the participant’s choice to retain her own religious identity. Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia, 8900 Little River Turnpike in Fairfax. Contact Laurie Albert, 703-537-3064 or H Y P E R L I N K “mailto:LaurieA@jccnv.org” LaurieA@jccnv.org.

Franconia United Methodist Church, 6037 Franconia Road, Alexandria, offers traditional Sunday church

services at 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. plus Sunday School classes for all ages at 9:45 a.m. Childcare is available 8:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. There will be a Terry Hall Concert on Saturday, April 14 at 4 p.m. with old spirituals, classic hymns, southern gospel favorites and more. 703-971-5151 or admin@franconiaumc.org or www.franconiaumc.org.

RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) is for people interested in becoming Catholic or learning about the Catholic Church. A group meets at 7:30 p.m. on July 6 and 20 at St. Leo the Great Catholic Church, 3700 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. A group will begin meeting every Wednesday starting September. Sessions are in the Old Parish Hall. All are welcome. Contact Carolyn Smith at 703-273-5369 or carolynsmith.stleos@gmail.com.

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.

Metropolitan Community Church of Northern Virginia, 10383 Democracy Lane in Fairfax, presents worship services on Sundays at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. and choir practice (open to all) on Tuesdays at 7:15 p.m. www.mccnova.com or 703-691-0930.

Church of the Nativity offers a free general bereavement support group open to all adults on the first and third Thursday of each month 7:30-9 p.m. The church is located at 6400 Nativity Lane, Burke. Call 703-455-2400, ext. 17.

Arabic Bible Baptist Church is located at 6428 Ox Road in Fairfax Station. Services are on Saturdays at 6:30 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m. Pastor: Wissam Jamil. Call 703-273-5599.

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State delegates Mark Keam (D-35), Patrick Hope (D-47) and David Bulova (D-37) during the March 22 social progress presentation in Vienna hosted by SALT.



State Senator Barbara Favola (D-31) listens to her colleagues as each had a turn to speak.

In Search of 'Game Changing' Ideas

Local legislators reflect on social issues addressed by Virginia General Assembly in 2014.

At a presentation hosted by SALT [Social Action Linking Together] on March 22, more than 50 community activists gathered to hear local legislators offer brief comments on social progress in the Commonwealth of Virginia's 2014 General Assembly session. The presentation was hosted at American Legion 180.

State senators Janet Howell (D-32), Barbara Favola (D-31) and Dick Saslaw (D-35), and state delegates Mark Keam (D-35), Ken Plum (D-36), David Bulova (D-37), Alfonzo Lopez D-49), Marcus Simon (D-53), and Patrick Hope sat on the panel.

LEGISLATORS ON THE PANEL, all Democrats, were invited to speak for five minutes each on bills and issues confronting the General Assembly and the Commonwealth. Few had time to get past introductory remarks and few details on the General Assembly emerged.

Keam, however, addressed a problem confronted by military personnel not deployed overseas when submitting absentee ballots. Keam's House Bill 838 would address an inconsistency in the policies followed by the Virginia State Board of Elections. Because of differences in various federal and state election laws, absentee ballots mailed in from overseas by U.S. military men and women are accepted by election officials even if the inside envelope that contains the ballot is not fully sealed.

"On the other hand, an absentee ballot mailed from within Virginia with the same imperfection on the inside envelope is rejected by election officials," Keam

said. "My bill would make the process consistent for all absentee ballots, regardless of from where they were mailed.

"My bill passed both the House and Senate with little opposition, which is pleasantly surprising since this is one of the very few bills introduced by a Democrat to allow more votes to be counted, that has passed the conservative Republican House of Delegates."

<http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?141+sum+HB838> includes the language which, essentially, states that an absentee ballot will not be voided solely because the inner envelope containing the voted ballot is imperfectly sealed so long as the outside envelope containing the ballot envelope is sealed, Keam said.



Del. Ken Plum (D-36) remarked he had introduced a redistricting bill back in 1982.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER Richard E. Rubenstein, professor of conflict resolution and public affairs at George Mason University, spoke on the need for "game-changing" ideas to resolve income inequality in Virginia, suggesting that university researchers come together statewide to brainstorm ideas that address the issue. He recommended, also, a state commission addressing the causes of poverty.

"This legislative session created a new opportunity for people to take a fresh look at issues that have been pending for a long time, such as income inequality and what the state is doing on behalf of vulnerable citizens," Keam said in a subsequent phone conversation. "However, these issues ended up with the same result this year because of the same partisan agenda that stalled things in years past."

The morning presentation was co-sponsored by SALT, Virginians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty [VADP], Citizens United for Rehabilitation for Errants -VA [CURE], and Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations [VACOLAO].

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THE CONNECTION

East All-Stars Beat West in Suburban Classic

West Springfield's Berglund wins 3-point shootout.

BY JON ROETMAN
THE CONNECTION

Sunday's 10th Suburban Classic started with a 3-point shootout — the perfect competition for West Springfield senior Amy Berglund to show off her sharpshooting skills.

After posting the top score of the first round (19), Berglund won the event with a score of 9 in the finals, beating McLean's Cami Prock, Centreville's Jenna Green and Osbourn's Bailey Dufrene.

Berglund, who scored more than 1,000 points in her high school career, knocked down countless 3-pointers in her four years as a Spartan, but she said performing in front of a small crowd in a quiet Oakton High School gym was more nerve-wracking than playing in a big game.

"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."

Berglund's 3-point shootout title preceded the afternoon's main event: the East-West all-star game. Berglund, who plans to play for University of Northwestern St. Paul next season, scored 10 points and helped the East all-stars beat 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, by as many as 22 points in the second half.

Prock finished with 12 points for the East and earned team MVP honors. Prock "took a couple emotional days off" following McLean's season-ending 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 the Suburban Classic.

The East all-stars led 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."



West Springfield senior and East all-star Amy Berglund won the 3-point shootout at the 10th Suburban Classic on March 23 at Oakton High School and scored 10 points during the main event.



Lake Braddock senior Caitlyn Mandela scored four points for the East all-stars during the 10th Suburban Classic on March 23 at Oakton High School.

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 feel-

ing."

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 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

"My heart was racing, I don't know why. 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."

— West Springfield senior Amy Berglund

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.'"

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."

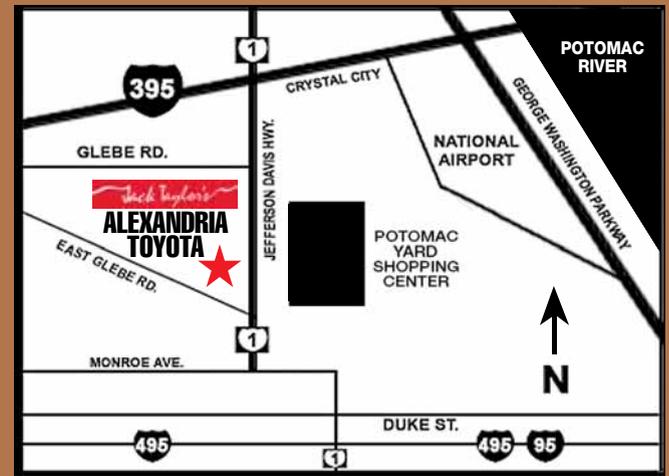
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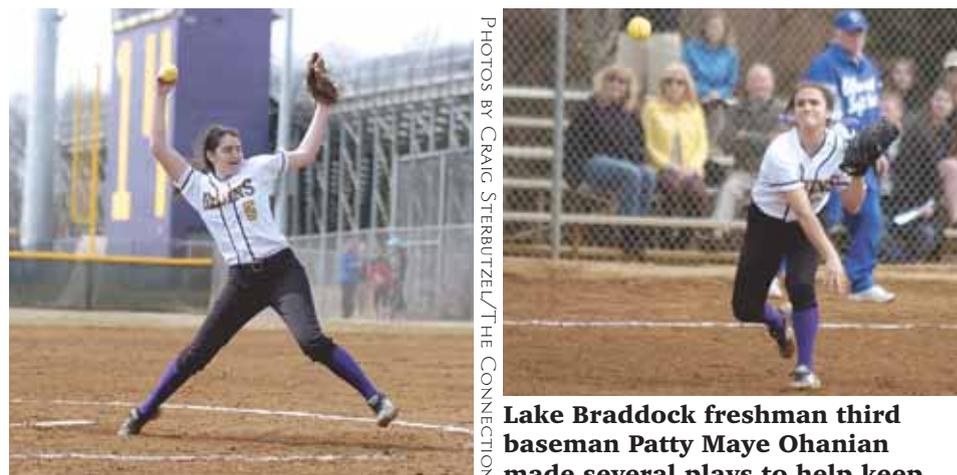
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SPORTS



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Lake Braddock senior Ashley Flesch pitched a one-hitter against Bishop O'Connell on March 22.

Lake Braddock freshman third baseman Patty Maye Ohanian made several plays to help keep pitcher Ashley Flesch's perfect game alive into the seventh inning on March 22.

Lake Braddock Softball Beats O'Connell

Bruins pitcher Flesch tosses one-hitter against Knights.

BY JON ROETMAN
THE CONNECTION

The Lake Braddock softball team returns two all-state athletes from a 2013 group that captured the program's first district championship since 2001.

If Saturday's performance against Bishop O'Connell, one of the premier programs in the Washington, D.C.-metro area, is any indication, the Bruins have a chance to be even better in 2014.

Lake Braddock senior pitcher Ashley Flesch hurled a one-hitter and the Bruins defeated O'Connell 2-1 on March 22 in Burke.

O'Connell, a private school located in Arlington, has won the last 10 Washington Catholic Athletic Conference championships, yet Flesch had a perfect game going entering the seventh inning. She hit O'Connell leadoff batter Hayley Metcalf with a 3-2 pitch, giving the Knights their first base runner of the afternoon. After retiring the next two batters, Flesch surrendered a single to O'Connell first baseman Olivia Giaquinto, ending the no-hit bid. A Lake Braddock error on the play allowed a run to score and put the tying run in scoring position for the Knights, but Flesch got O'Connell pitcher Erin Sweeney to fly out to left field to end the game.

"[Flesch] started getting tired, I think, but she held it together," Lake Braddock head coach George Rumore said. "I didn't want to switch [pitchers] in the seventh because she had a no-hitter going."

After Flesch lost her perfect game, Lake Braddock had an infield meeting near the pitcher's circle to discuss strategy. Did Flesch struggle to bounce back?

"No. I was just trying to get the win the whole time," Flesch said. "I didn't even realize that I had a perfect game until after

the fact. But, oh well. We got the win, that's all that matters."

Flesch, who earned honorable mention all-state honors as a pitcher last season, threw seven innings, allowing one hit and one unearned run. She struck out eight, walked none and hit one batter.

While O'Connell struggled to get the bats going, Lake Braddock jumped out to a 1-0 lead in the first inning when junior first baseman Amanda Hendrix, a first-team all-state selection last season, delivered an RBI double. The Bruins added what proved to be a pivotal insurance run in the bottom of the sixth, when junior center-fielder Jenna Edwards led off the inning with a single and, two batters later, sophomore left-fielder Danielle Newman drove her in with an RBI double.

Edwards finished 2-for-3. Flesch and junior second baseman Katherine Plescow each had a single.

Last season, Lake Braddock finished 19-2 and defeated six-time defending Patriot District champion South County for the Bruins' first district title in more than a decade. However, four days after beating the Stallions in the Patriot District championship game, the Bruins lost to Centreville in the opening round of the regional tournament.

Rumore said the Bruins entered regionals mentally drained after winning the district title. Flesch, a four-year varsity athlete, said Lake Braddock has a chance to be even better this year. "It was a great measuring stick for us, where we are, what we need to improve," Flesch said of beating O'Connell. "... That's a big boost for the team, mentally. ... Every year, we've gotten more and more talent and we just expect more out of each other. We're expecting to get further and further every year."

If Saturday's win is any indication, the Bruins have a shot to make that happen.

"It's a good win for us, especially under the circumstances — nobody's really been [outside]," Rumore said. "This is only our third time since tryouts started we've been out on a field, so it's nice."

Lake Braddock will travel to face South County at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, March 28.



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