

Brightview Opens in Great Falls

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**Dranesville Supervisor
John Foust talks to the
new Brightview residents
during the grand opening.**

'This One's for the Girls'

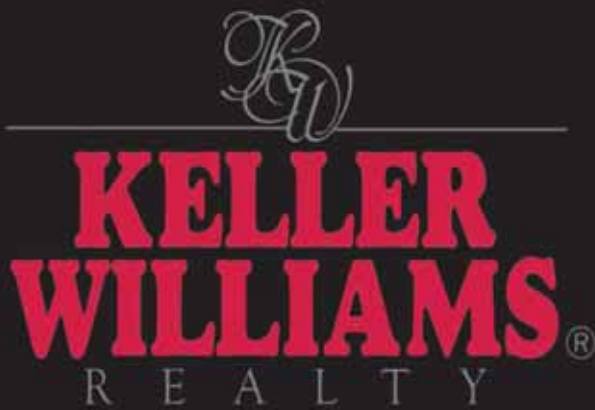
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'This One's for the Girls'

Comstock becomes first woman in nearly a decade to join state's Congressional Delegation.

BY VICTORIA ROSS
THE CONNECTION

Virginia Del. Barbara Comstock became part of the Republican tide that ripped control of the Senate away from Democrats last week, helping the GOP secure its largest majority in Congress since World War II.

She scored a resounding 17-point victory over Democratic opponent John Foust to win the seat held by retiring Rep. Frank Wolf (R-10) for more than 30 years. When she goes to Washington in January, she will be the only woman in Virginia's Congressional Delegation in nearly a decade.

Shortly after 10 p.m. on election night, Nov. 4, Republican Del. Barbara Comstock entered the Hilton ballroom in Ashburn to the tune of her favorite song - "This One's for the Girls" sung by Martina McBride.

The sassy, defiant country anthem - which tells girls to "stand your ground when everyone's giving in" - struck the right chord with Comstock's supporters, who chanted and clapped along with the music as Comstock took the stage to deliver her victory speech.

Comstock, 55, was clearly savoring the moment, defeating Democrat John Foust for the Northern Virginia Congressional seat held by retiring Rep. Frank Wolf, Comstock's former boss and longtime political mentor.

Her decisive victory Tuesday ended one of the most contentious, expensive and closely-watched races in the Commonwealth.

When Wolf announced his retirement last December, the news sparked a flurry of speculation about the district's possible political shift, from solid Republican territory to more moderate "swing" district.

Democrats became bullish on the seat that had not been competitive for 30 years, and saw a prime pick-up opportunity.

IN FEBRUARY, The Rothenberg Political Report rated the race as "leans Republican," noting that in recent elections, the district supported both Republicans and Democrats in presidential and gubernatorial races. The Washington Post ranked the seat as "the sixth most likely seat to flip control" in the 2014 election.

But Comstock, according to both GOP and Democratic party insiders, ran an extremely disciplined campaign, and consistently delivered an appealing, moderate message to voters.



Republican state Del. Barbara Comstock, who defeated Democratic opponent John Foust by 17 points in a contentious battle to replace retiring U.S. Rep. Frank Wolf in Virginia's 10th district, was joined onstage by her husband, parents and children at her victory party Tuesday night.

PHOTOS BY VICTORIA ROSS/THE CONNECTION



Fairfax County Supervisor John Foust delivered his concession speech around 9 p.m. Tuesday at the Dulles Marriott hotel. He was joined by his wife, Dr. Marilyn Jerome, and two sons.

"It was her race to lose from the start," said one longtime Democratic strategist.

As she addressed her supporters, Comstock thanked Wolf, and said she was "honored to follow in his footsteps."

"We'll take this great Virginia way and bring it to Washington for all of you."

Comstock said. "We know that government closest to the people is the government that works. The one thing I can promise you is that I'm going to work hard to push government down to you guys and gals in the 10th district."

Then she took a final, defiant swipe at Foust.

"I guess I'm finally getting a real job."

— Barbara Comstock in her victory speech

"I guess I'm finally getting a real job," Comstock quipped, referencing a comment Foust made during a debate about Comstock, a former Congressional aide, opposition researcher and political lobbyist.

During that debate in September, Foust questioned whether Comstock had "even had a real job." He argued his comments were taken out of context, but Comstock's campaign accused Foust of being "sexist," and repeatedly used the line against him in numerous campaign ads and stump speeches.

He later clarified that he was criticizing her career as a partisan operative, casting her as someone who would work in Congress to advance the agenda of the wealthy elite and special interest groups instead of the average constituent.

In his concession speech Tuesday before supporters at the Dulles Marriott, Foust, a Fairfax County Supervisor since 2007, alluded to the personal attacks and rancor that marked the contentious campaign.

"I think about the negative things my opponent said about me and the distortions," Foust said, standing on the stage with his wife, Dr. Marilyn Jerome, and his two sons. "It was hurtful. I think about how I would feel if those things were said about my own father, and I'm sorry I put my sons through this..."

Foust said there were many more substantive issues the candidates "could have talked about," and "so many things that remain to get done in Washington, things that led me to get into this race."

IN HER VICTORY SPEECH, Comstock said she considered "hiring fabulous people" one of her best attributes, and brought her campaign manager - Susan Falconer - onstage to thank her.

"We beat the boys, didn't we?" Comstock said.

After her speech, Comstock left the stage as her theme song played again.

"I think it's really cool that she played 'This One's for the Girls' as she came in and left the stage," said Eve Marie Barner Gleason from Loudoun County. "She has a remarkable ability to build coalitions. I don't know anyone who can call her extreme."



Residents Betty Ogg, Tom Rainey and Marc Nevenstone cheer after cutting the ribbon during Brightview Senior Living's grand opening.



PHOTOS BY REENA SINGH/THE CONNECTION

Residents play the bells during Brightview Senior Living's grand opening.

Brightview Opens in Great Falls

Senior community allows residents to stay close to home.

BY REENA SINGH
THE CONNECTION

Brightview Senior Living opened with a party and a full house. As Great Falls' first senior living community, the assisted living complex's grand opening on Nov. 6 gave local seniors the option to stay close to their loved ones.

"It's a privilege to make this into a home for so many of our older adults," said Executive Director Tina Aulakh.

She told the new residents that the community loves all of them and hopes they feel that love during the duration of their stay -

"a new chapter," as she called it, for these residents' lives.

She said the land that Brightview is where once Thelma's Ice Cream was. The center is honoring the memory by serving the original recipe of the two favorites, coffee and black cherry ice cream. Many people in the crowd cheered for the news.

Dranesville Supervisor John Foust said he was also excited about the news in his speech.

"It broke our hearts when we heard Thelma's was going to close," he said. "We're glad to have it back."

He commended the opening of the facility, stating that it allows Great Falls citizens

to stay in the village as they get older.

"It's absolutely beautiful," he said. "It's a tremendous asset to the community."

David D. Carliner, executive vice president of Shelter Development, agreed that the community is beautiful and hopes the new residents appreciate it.

"At the end of the day, this is really all about the people," he said.

Several of the new residents entertained visitors with a drum circle and bells played to the tune of classic tunes. The "bellini reception" left residents and visitors alike with libations or ice cream goblets in hand while they toured about the common rooms and hallways. After the speeches, the first resi-

dents of Brightview got to participate in the ribbon-cutting. The building opened for new residents in mid-September but was not unveiled to the community until last week.

Reston resident Betty Ogg was one of those original residents. She only had to travel from "right up the street," she said, from her previous home to Brightview.

"I think it's wonderful," she said. "It's a huge change, but it's wonderful."

Another one of the first residents, Marc Nevenstone, previously lived in Chantilly. As a New York City native who appreciated a good laugh, he said he is trying to get an authentic city-style deli in the cafeteria.

"So far it's been pretty good," he said. "It's an amalgamation of cultures."

Jim Lehrer to Participate in Great Falls Speaker's Series

Popular anchorman Jim Lehrer will be the guest speaker at this month's Great Falls Speaker's Series (GFSS) on Tuesday, Nov. 18 at 7 p.m., at the Great Falls Library. Lehrer, also a prolific author and a playwright, will be on-hand to discuss his newest novel, "Top Down," about the Kennedy assassination. Signed copies of Lehrer's book will also be available for sale (for as long as supplies last).

The award-winning journalist teamed with Robert MacNeil in 1975 to create the "The MacNeil/Lehrer Report." In 1983, it became "The MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour," the first 60-minute evening news program on television. When MacNeil retired in 1995, the program was renamed "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer."



COURTESY PBS NEWSHOUR
Newsman Jim Lehrer

Kristin Clark Taylor, founder of the new Great Falls Speaker's Series which first launched in September, says Lehrer's appearance has stirred excitement in the community.

"There's definitely an excited buzz beginning about Mr. Lehrer's upcoming appearance," Taylor says. "Folks are eager to hear him reflect on the highlights of his extraordinary life, but they're also excited about actively engaging him in a comfortable conversation - which is really what this on-

going series is all about; the comfortable exchange of ideas."

Donna Mastran, a long-time Great Falls resident, is taking active steps to prepare for the veteran newsman's appearance.

"I've always admired Jim Lehrer's work as a journalist, and now I'm looking forward to hearing him share his perspective

as an author," she says. "I'm reading his newest book, 'Top Down,' right now, and I'm really enjoying it. This is why I like this new speaker's series. Where else can I go to hear a best-selling author talk about the very book I happen to be reading?"

In the last seven presidential elections, the award-winning newsman moderated 12 of the nationally televised candidate debates. Born in Wichita, Kan., he began his work in journalism as a newspaper reporter in Dallas and also served three years as an infantry officer in the Marine Corps.

Taylor says that most people still see Jim Lehrer primarily as a journalist. "They don't realize that he's also a prolific author and playwright," she says. "He's written 21 novels, three non-fiction books and four plays. So it's a unique opportunity to have him sit down with us."

Although reserved seating is already filled to capacity, open seating remains available but is filling up quickly.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

The **Kingstowne Center for Active Adults** in Alexandria needs a Van Driver to take participants on outings and an ESL Teacher. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults and click on Volunteer Solutions.

Meals on Wheels needs drivers in Chantilly, Clifton, McLean and Falls Church on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Substitute drivers needed throughout the county. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults and click on Volunteer Solutions.

The **Wakefield Senior Center** in Annandale needs a Chair Exercise Instructor, Spanish-speaking interpreters, an Experienced Canasta Player to teach participants, and certified instructors for classes in Ballroom Dance and Pilates. Volunteer instructor positions could lead to part-time employment. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults and click on Volunteer Solutions.

Fairfax County needs volunteers to drive older adults to medical appointments and wellness programs; urgent need in Reston area. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults and click on Volunteer Solutions.

The **Annandale Adult Day Health Care Center** in Annandale needs Spanish-speaking social companions and a licensed hair stylist to wash, cut and style hair for participants. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults and click on Volunteer Solutions.

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Opening November 6

This year, the Ice Palace is celebrating the November 18 release of the Disney FROZEN Sing-Along Edition on DVD & Digital HD. This much-loved, interactive holiday display features the sights and sounds of Anna, Elsa and their friends Olaf, Kristoff and Sven, plus a 30-foot Ice Palace with falling snow, a light show and other activities for the whole family. Come and see how you compare in size to Sven and Olaf and have your photo taken with Olaf at the Ice Throne. End your magical journey with a visit to Santa and a special Disney FROZEN Look-and-Find book!

Visit the Ice Palace Gift Shop

Pick up a copy of the FROZEN sing-along DVD (available November 18) along with lots of other fun items including FROZEN dolls, puzzles books and much more.

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Each year, **the Northwest Federal Credit Union Foundation** (NWFCU Foundation) awards a total of \$100,000 in college scholarships – \$5,000 each – to 20 students who have demonstrated qualities of leadership, dedication and commitment in school, at home and in the community.

"These students have displayed the qualities that will make them future leaders in our community," said Chris McDonald, Chairman of the NWFCU Foundation and President/CEO of Northwest Federal Credit Union. "We are pleased to make an investment in their future – and our community's future – by helping them pay for college."

Winners of the 2014 Ben DeFelice Scholarships from our area include:

❖ Alexandra Cramer, graduate of Langley High School. She will attend the College of William & Mary.

❖ Jamie Joeyen-Waldorf, graduate of Langley High School. She will attend Northwestern University.

❖ Jennifer Prosser, graduate of Oakton High School. She will attend the University of Notre Dame.

❖ Sydney Sampson, graduate of James Madison High School. She

will attend the University of Virginia.

Twenty-five students from Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) have been named 2015 National Achievement Scholarship program semifinalists in an academic competition for Black American high school students conducted by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC). The students represent 12 high schools in FCPS.

The semifinalists are:

❖ Annandale High School: Yonatan Ayele.

❖ Edison High School: Maxine Morgan and Shalom Yiblet.

❖ Fairfax High School: William Sampong.

❖ Hayfield Secondary School: Camryn Bishop, Reese Cloud, and Dominique Edwards.

❖ Lake Braddock Secondary School: Leul Berhane-Meskel and Kinaya Hassane.

❖ Langley High School: Leah Yirga.

❖ Madison High School: Rachel Bostick, Jesse Ernest, and Benjamin Jackson.

❖ Marshall High School: Natascha Whyte.

❖ South County High School: Maya Armstrong and Olivia Jones.

❖ Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST): Azeez Abdikarim, Arielle Ampeh, Rebecca Clark-Callender, Theodore Richardson, Hannah Wied, and Rollin Woodford.

❖ West Potomac High School: Zoe Smith.

❖ Woodson High School: Robert Cuyjet and Daniel Pryce.

The semifinalists will compete for more than 800 Achievement Scholarship awards, worth \$2.5 million, to be awarded next spring. The awards will be supported by corporations, professional organizations, foundations, and funds from the NMSC. To be considered for a scholarship, semifinalists must advance to the finalist level by fulfilling additional requirements.

Andrew Hwang, of Great Falls, was named to the Dean's list for academic excellence for the spring 2014 semester at Johns Hopkins University.

Kristen Ashley Wolaver, daughter of John and Barbara Wolaver of Great Falls, and graduate of Langley High School Class of 2013, completed her freshman year at the University of Pittsburgh, Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences. Kristen has accepted membership in The National Society of Collegiate Scholars (NSCS).

Whitney Elizabeth Wolaver, daughter of John and Barbara Wolaver of Great Falls, and graduate of Langley High School Class of 2010, earned a Bachelor of Science Degree Cum Laude in Neuroscience with a minor in Chemistry and a Certificate of Conceptual Foundations of Medicine during the spring commencement exercises in April 2014 at the University of Pittsburgh, Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences. Whitney will begin the Graduate Program in Anatomical and Translational Sciences at George Washington University in August 2014.

William Gralley, son of Craig and Janet Gralley of Great Falls, earned a Bachelor of Science degree in criminal justice during the spring commencement exercises at Radford University.

Grayson Smith, of Great Falls, earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in accounting, cum laude, during the spring commencement exercises at Auburn University. He is currently enrolled in Auburn's Master's of Accounting Program.

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OPINION

Thanksgiving Help for Those in Need

Roll up those sleeves and help.

This week is the week to jump in to help the many organizations that will help needy families through the holidays. Here are a few ideas of how to help, but the opportunities are limitless.

More than 236,000 people living in the area do not have access to enough food to sustain an active, healthy life for all members of their households, according to Catholic Charities. That is to say, more than a quarter of a million people, including many children, go hungry on a regular basis.

Catholic Charities is launching a new food distribution project, the St. Lucy Project, designed to respond to food insecurity in the diocese. "The reality in Northern Virginia is that thousands of our neighbors suffer from gripping poverty and hunger," said Bishop Paul S. Loverde of the Catholic Diocese of Arlington. "Pope Francis has consistently called us to be a 'church of the poor

and for the poor.'" The project will provide food in Alexandria and other parts of Northern Virginia. See www.cdda.net for more.

Our Daily Bread will help 2,000 people for Thanksgiving and through the holidays. They need help. Sign up to deliver a meal, adopt a family or just donate. <https://www.odbfairfax.org/Thanksgiving>

United Community Ministries is seeking donations to its food pantry, donations to help prevent homelessness for 300 families on the brink, plus children's books and toys. <http://www.ucmagency.org/how-to-help.html>

Northern Virginia Family Services needs help with Operation Turkey, for 800 families. Food, money and volunteers needed. <http://www.nvfs.org/>

The Arlington Food Assistance Center is facing record demand, helping more than 8,000 people, and poised to go far above its annual budget. Find out more and donate <http://www.afac.org/>

Cornerstones' annual Thanksgiving Basket Food Drive will help nearly 1,000 families this season. 571-323-9555, www.cornerstonesva.org.

SHARE of McLean seeks donations of grocery gift cards and more. Checks and gift cards can be sent to: Holiday Celebration, Share, Inc. PO Box 210, McLean, VA 22101. 703-284-2179. www.SHAREofMcLean.org

LINK, serving Herndon, Chantilly, Loudoun and more, needs contributions of food, coats and holiday toys for children, plus volunteers. On Nov. 15, LINK will distribute food, gently used winter coats/clothing and grocery gift cards to more than 800 families. 703-437-1776 www.linkagainsthunger.org

FACETS helps parents, their children and individuals who suffer the effects of poverty in the Fairfax area. FACETS is always in need of volunteers, and offers a variety of one-time and ongoing opportunities. 703-865-4251 or volunteer@facetscares.org. Information about supply donations and FACETS holiday gifts drive is available on the website at www.facetscares.org.

You can find a list of local Fairfax nonprofits here: <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2014/aug/27/newcomers-guide-area-nonprofits/>

— MARY KIMM,

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

EDITORIAL

Resources and Support for the Caregiver

BY JOHN C. COOK
SUPERVISOR (R-BRADDOCK DISTRICT)



If you have ever been in the position of providing ongoing, long-term care for a loved one, you are very familiar with the sacrifices involved. You should also know that you are not alone. Whether it is a result of illness, disability, or injury, 39 percent of all adult Americans are caring for an older loved one - an increase from 30 percent in 2010.

Most older-adults would prefer to age in place. We know this to be true, and it makes sense. It's a more comfortable, familiar environment. However, it does come with its own stressors and challenges as 80 percent of the care for the elderly is provided by family, friends and

edge and appreciate all those around us who go the extra mile to take care of others.

If you are a caregiver, know that Fairfax County has support services that can help as you continue on the caregiving journey. The Long Term Coordinating Care Council is a wonderful resource to start. You can visit the website at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/lccc/>. Another option, a phone line, 703-324-7948, is the Services for Older Adults. There you will reach social workers that can help you navigate

COMMENTARY

neighbors. Every November we take time to recognize Caregiver Appreciation Month. It is a time to acknowl-

through the myriad of resources available. The Fairfax County 50+ initiative is also looking to help develop additional services and resources for caregivers. Please contact my office to learn more about the progress of these programs. You may also consider reaching out to ElderLink, a non-profit organization created by a partnership of the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging, the Inova Health System, and the Alzheimer's Association, that seeks to provide affordable care management services to older adults. They can be reached at 703-324-7948. Another helpful resource is the Caregiver Action Network website. It offers a variety of tips and tools - <http://www.caregiveraction.org/resources/toolbox/>.

I also hope that my show this

month on Fairfax County Channel 16, which features several personal caregivers, will help those who find themselves in the position of providing care. The show airs throughout the month and can be seen Sundays at 5 p.m., Wednesdays at 7 p.m. and Fridays at 5 p.m.

It is very important to remember that you must take care of yourself first in order to provide the best level of care to your patient or loved one. It is very easy to become consumed with trying to finish all tasks only to find that many more are waiting. Develop a support network. Find respite and relaxation for yourself. If you are not a caregiver today, you may become one. So reach out to help if you can. By working together, we can build communities ready to serve our neighbors.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Questions About the Pike

To the Editor:

Now that the election is over and all candidates have been severely bashed, I hope there is enough energy left to answer a question regarding Georgetown Pike.

Will someone explain, to those of us who don't have an engineering degree, what VDOT is doing to the Pike and how long is it going to take them to do it? The right turn from Georgetown Pike on to

Walker road has disappeared. Where did it go? When is it coming back?

Marjorie Martin
Great Falls

Kudos for Supervisors

To the Editor:

This week's story "Board Approves Bicycle Master Plan" (Oct. 29), discussed a major update to the county's transportation plan-

ning. Although the county did not list climate change as one of the major factors in its decision, this plan will help county travelers reduce their carbon footprint. That is an important benefit to everyone in the county, regardless of whether they commute by bicycle. Climate change causes increased respiratory conditions, and these diseases are likely to get worse as the climate gets hotter. As a veteran of the health care industry, I care about these illnesses and the costs associated with them. Many legislative bod-

ies are coming to the same conclusion. For example, the board's decision puts it in line with that of the U.S. Catholic bishops, who recently voted to support limits on carbon pollution such as those in the EPA's Clean Power Plan. Regardless of what faith we come from or how we get to work, these decisions put everyone at less risk for health conditions associated with climate change. Kudos to the board for its wise decision.

Eileen Erbengi
Falls Church

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WEEK IN GREAT FALLS

Great Falls Historical Society to Host Holiday Open House

The Great Falls Historical Society is hosting a Holiday Open House on Thursday, Dec. 11, at 6 to 8:30 p.m. at the historic Old Forestville Schoolhouse at 9812 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. The festive event will kick off a community-wide membership drive by the Society and is open to all residents of Great Falls. Families and children of all ages are welcome.

Come enjoy the holiday music, hor d'oeuvres and desserts made by some of the finest cooks in the community. A selection of historical displays will be on view, and Kathleen Murphy, president of GFHS and the GFHS board members will be in attendance to answer any questions about the

Historical Society and its mission and projects. For almost 40 years, GFHS has been dedicated to preserving the history of Great Falls and informing the residents of the community of its unique past and traditions. The society presents monthly programs for its members and the public on a historical aspect of Great Falls and the surrounding area, it hosts the annual Great Falls Day celebrating history, family and community, and it continues to gather local historical artifacts, photos, oral histories, research and published works through its historical archive.

The GFHS welcomes you to stop by, celebrate the season, and learn a bit more about the historic community, while reveling in the wonderful music, delicious food, and warm fellowship with your neighbors. Contact Betty Swartz (703-759-2378) Hospitality Chair or Jan Schar (703-759-3940) Membership Chair for more information.

FAITH NOTES

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

St. Francis Episcopal Church, 9220 Georgetown Pike in Great Falls, offers musical, educational, outreach and fellowship ministries in addition to worship services, including a 7:45 a.m. worship service without music; 9 a.m. worship service, children's chapel and children's choirs; 10 a.m. Sunday school and adult forum; and 11 a.m. worship service with adult choir. 703-759-2082.

The Antioch Christian Church offers a time of Prayer and Healing on Wednesday evenings at

6:30 p.m. for anyone wanting encouragement and healing through prayers. People are available to pray with you or for you. Antioch Christian Church is located at 1860 Beulah Road in Vienna. www.antiochdoc.org

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

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

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RB West Carries Langley Football Into Playoffs

Senior becomes Saxons' all-time leading rusher.

BY JON ROETMAN
THE CONNECTION

Langley fans groaned as running back Tyler West laid on the turf and reached for his leg during the fourth quarter of the Saxons' regular-season finale against rival McLean on Nov. 7.

"That's our team!" one person yelled from the stands.

As it turned out, West was OK and later raced into the end zone for a 35-yard touchdown, extending an already healthy Langley lead.

While West has had some help along the way, his importance to the Langley football team is undeniable. On Friday, he reached a career milestone and helped keep the Saxons' season alive.

West carried 38 times for 276 yards and four touchdowns, leading Langley to a 36-13 win over McLean at Langley High School. West's performance propelled him to the top of the Saxons' all-time rushing list with 4,198 yards, surpassing Phil Mun's total of 4,053. With the victory, Langley secured a spot in the 6A North region playoffs.

"He's a phenomenal player, a phenomenal athlete," sophomore right guard Tyler Howerton said about West. "... He's one of our most important players. There's no way we could be where we are without him."

WEST, a 5-foot-11, 205-pound senior, did most of his damage in just two seasons. He carried nine times for 62 yards as a sophomore, when Mun was a senior. West took over the starting role in 2013 and rushed for 2,230 yards and 26 touchdowns behind a big, experienced offensive line anchored by all-region guard Brooks Norris, who now plays for William & Mary. The Saxons averaged 40.1 points per contest that season, a program record, finished 9-3 and won a playoff game.

In 2014, the Saxons entered the season with a younger offensive line, which became even less experienced when 6-foot-6, 265-pound senior tackle Connor Halm suffered a knee injury early in the year.

Langley opened the season with lopsided losses to Yorktown and Stone Bridge as the Saxons' running game started slowly.

"It's a young group that we had this year," West said. "We kind of knew it would take a little while and it did. We started slow and [head] coach [John] Howerton and everyone worked together. ... Probably around the time of the Fairfax game is when the line started to get everything going."

West rushed for 165 yards against Fairfax on Oct. 10, but Langley lost, 35-28, dropping the Saxons' record to 2-4.



PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

Langley running back Tyler West rushed for 276 yards and four touchdowns against McLean on Nov. 7.

Oakton Football Reaches Postseason

The Oakton and Langley football teams each earned a spot in the 6A North region playoffs.

Oakton enters the postseason as the region's No. 14 seed and will travel to face No. 3 Lake Braddock at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 14.

The Cougars defeated Herndon 21-16 in both teams' regular-season finale on Nov. 7. The win improved Oakton's record to 5-5 and helped the team earn a playoff berth. The Cougars' reward is a first-round matchup with Lake Braddock,

which finished the regular season with an 8-2 record. The Bruins lost to a pair of playoff teams, Robinson and West Springfield, but also defeated playoff teams Westfield, Annandale and South County.

Oakton's lone win against a playoff-bound team came against Robinson on Oct. 24. The Cougars won the Northern Region in 2012, but missed the playoffs last season.

Langley enters the playoffs as the No. 15 seed and will travel to face No. 2 Westfield at 7:30 p.m. on Friday.

Sophomore Lachlan Pitts, junior Ben Culmer and junior Xavier Henschel have played tackle for Langley. Junior MJ Johnson and sophomore Tyler Howerton have played guard and senior Ben So is one of multiple Saxons who have played center.

Against McLean, the Langley offensive line helped West put forth a dominant performance.

No. 5's first touchdown, a 5-yard run, gave the Saxons a 7-0 advantage in the opening quarter. Early in the second quarter, West took the snap out of Langley's "Ram" formation and scored on a 6-yard run. Sixty-seven seconds later, West's 7-yard scamper extended the Saxons' lead to 21-0.

West's final carry was a 35-yard touchdown run with 6:33 left in the fourth quarter, giving Langley a 36-7 advantage. The Saxons defeated the Highlanders for the

third straight time and qualified for the playoffs for the fifth consecutive season.

John Howerton said the senior running back isn't much of a talker, but his performance speaks volumes.

"For as quiet as he is, he's more of a role model through his actions," Howerton said. "I'd much rather have a kid lead by example than be a big talker. He's always been a great kid, and he just has abilities that other kids don't have."

WEST'S PERFORMANCE against McLean gave him 1,906 yards and 25 touchdowns this season. He's 94 yards shy of his second 2,000-yard season and needs 459 yards to catch Langley's single-season rushing leader, Trevor Bacon, who amassed 2,365 during the 2004 season.

West said he would like to reach the 2,000-yard mark.

"That would be huge for me," West said. "I'm definitely going to try to get that last 100 yards and hopefully I can get more. That's definitely a milestone for me right now."

"He's one of our most important players. There's no way we could be where we are without him."

— Langley guard Tyler Howerton about running back Tyler West.

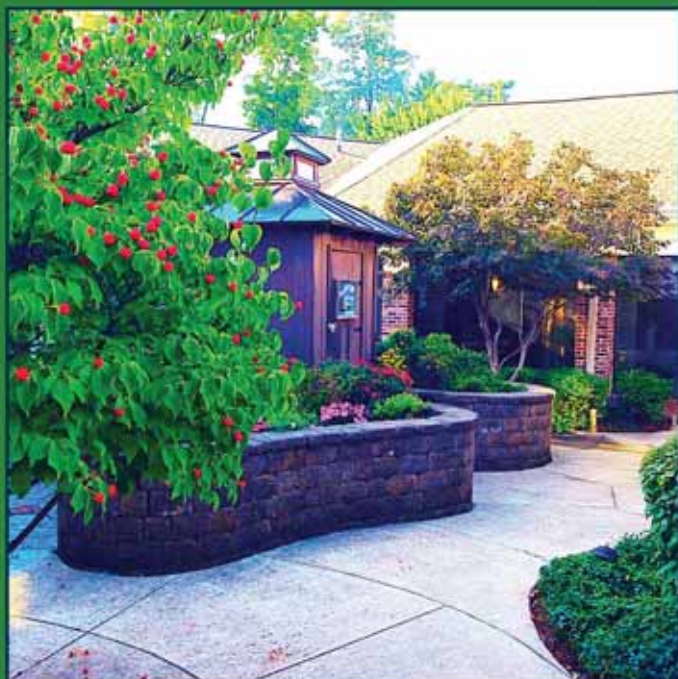
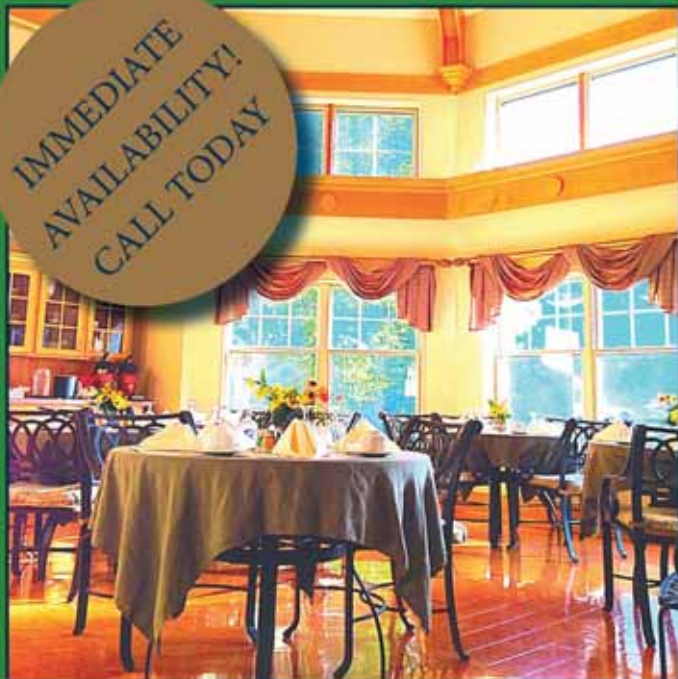
Getting at least 94 yards on the ground will be a tough task for West and the Saxons (6-4), who enter the playoffs as the region's No. 15 seed and will travel to face No. 2 Westfield (9-1) at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 14. The Bulldogs have reached the region final each of the last three seasons, and this year defeated defending state champion and No. 1 seed Centreville 42-41 in double overtime.

"I know that they're going to be tough," West said, "and we're going to have to practice really hard to get to where we need to be."

West enters Friday's playoff game with 548 carries for 4,198 yards and 51 touchdowns in his Langley career. If the Saxons are going to pull off an upset of Westfield, it will be West leading the way.

"It feels good to be able to have a running back like him behind me," Tyler Howerton said. "A good block will lead to a good run ... [but] I know that even if there's a mistake [up front], he'll still be able to pick up some yards."

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CALENDAR

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

THROUGH SATURDAY/NOV. 15

East & West. Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Vienna Arts Society Gallery on the Village Green, 513 Maple Ave. W, Vienna. Artist Libby Eckert exhibits her oil paintings inspired by her travels across America. Call 703-319-3220 or visit www.ViennaArtsSociety.org for more information.

THURSDAY/NOV. 13

GF Rotary Club. 7:30-8:30 a.m. River Bend Country Club, 375 Walker Road Great Falls. Great Falls Rotary Club Weekly Speaker Series. Download a membership form on their website. Open to anyone who has a personal connection to Great Falls and is interested in furthering Rotary's mission of Service Above Self.

Artists Meet for Coffee. 8:30-10 a.m. Katie's Coffeehouse, Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Local artists meet for coffee. All are welcome to drop in.

Reading Buddies. 4:30 p.m. Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Beginning readers and teens practice reading together.

FRIDAY/NOV. 14

GFL Drop-In Chess. 4:30-6:30 p.m. Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Drop in chess at the Great Falls Library Meeting Room. All ages are welcome.

Playdate Café. 10 a.m. Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Toys and play space for children, coffee and conversation for grown-ups.

Field Trip: Double Feature at AMC Tysons. 3:30-10 p.m. Old Firehouse Teen Center, 1440 Chain Bridge



The Alden in McLean's resident contemporary dance company, Christopher K. Morgan & Artists, returns for its fourth annual season with an evening of mixed repertory that includes two world premieres. "Inconstancy" will be performed at 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, Nov. 14 and 15. Tickets are \$30, \$20 for McLean tax district residents. The Alden is located inside the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Avenue

Road, McLean. Trip departs from and returns to teen center. \$30/20 MCC district residents.

www.mcleancenter.org.
Christopher K. Morgan & Artists:

"Inconstancy." 8 p.m. The Alden Theatre, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The Alden, Professional Artists Series. \$30/\$20 MCC district residents.

www.mcleancenter.org.
Gasland Part II Screening. 7:30 p.m. Unity Church of Fairfax, 854 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Free screening of the film Gasland Part II,

an explosive follow-up to the Oscar-nominated film Gasland. Filmmaker Josh Fox uses dark humor to take a deeper, broader look at the danger of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. Discussion following the film led by Dusty Horwitt, senior counsel, Environmental Working Group. For more information visit www.faithforclimate.org.

FRIDAY/NOV. 14 - SUNDAY/JAN. 4

Meadowlark's Winter Walk of Lights. 5:30 p.m. Meadowlark Botanical Garden, 9750 Meadowlark Gardens Court, Vienna. A winter wonderland, including a flowing stream of softly glowing lights, a two story animated fountain and a Gingerbread Village. Admission: \$13 adults, \$8 children ages 3-12; children under 3 are free.

SATURDAY/NOV. 15

ThanksGIVING Toy Sale. 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. St. Francis Episcopal Church, 9220 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Items include: dolls, cars, trucks, legos, trains, games, puzzles, books, videos, bikes, sports equipment, strollers, holiday dresses, costumes and much, much more. Proceeds of the sale will go to sponsored charities and educational scholarships. In conjunction, we will also be collecting gently used coats to be donated to the broader D.C. community.

Ballroom Dance. 8 – 9 p.m. Cha-Cha Lesson. 9 -11:30 p.m. Colvin Run Dance Hall, 10201 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. DJ music with Craig Bukowski playing favorite dance tunes from the 1930s to today. Attire

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 13



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For more information, please contact:

Bekah Atkinson at 301-244-3600 • exceptionalschoolsfair@gmail.com
www.exceptionalschoolsfair.com

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 12

is ballroom casual, everyone is welcome. \$15. 703-759-2685 or www.colvinrun.org.

Amadeus Strings with Josef

Spacek, violin soloist. 4 - 6 p.m. Saint Francis Church, 9220 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. This concert will feature works by Johann Sebastian Bach, Astor Piazzolla, and Dmitri Shostakovich. Tickets are \$30 at the door, and season passes are available for purchase at www.amadeusconcerts.com, or you can call 703-759-5334.

Christopher K. Morgan & Artists: "Inconstancy." 8 p.m. The Alden Theatre, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The Alden, Professional Artists Series. \$30/\$20 MCC district residents. www.mcleancenter.org.

The Mystery of Oolong Teas. 1-3 p.m. Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Taste a variety of "wulong" teas as you learn how they are created and what makes each style special, while enjoying some tea infused treats. Advance reservations and payment (\$30 per person) required through the Mill at 703-759-2771.

Model Railroad Open House. 1-5 p.m. Historic Vienna Train Station, 231 Dominion Road NE, Vienna. See and hear model trains. Free admission.

Cars & Coffee. 7-9 p.m. 760 Walker Road Great Falls. Gathering of cars at Katie's Coffeehouse. Antique, custom, hotrod, exotic, sports, etc.

CR Social Ballroom. 8 p.m. - 12:30 a.m. Colvin Run Community Hall, 10201 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Craig Bukowski's Ballroom Dance. \$15 includes lesson, dance, sodas and light snacks. Call Kathleen Milks

at 703-759-2685 for more information.

Craft Fair. 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street SE, Vienna. Oakton Girl Scout troop 1323 is sponsoring a craft fair. Bring the family for a great shopping experience to kick off the holiday season. They'll be food, drinks and activities for the younger members of the family to include face painting and fun hands-on crafts.

Rotary Fun Day & Magic Show! 1 p.m. Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Great Falls Rotary Club is providing a day of fun at the library. There will be a Magic Show, prizes, snacks, drinks and a Book Exchange. Please bring a gently-used children's book to exchange.

Chew the Fat. 1-4 p.m. Claude Moore Colonial Farm, 6310 Georgetown Pike, McLean. What can you do with fat? Many things! Come help the Claude Moore Colonial Farm family make soap, candles and even dubbin. Educational and fun. Great family activity. <http://www.1771.org/directions.htm>

MONDAY/NOV. 17

Foreign Language Storytime for All Ages. 1:30 p.m. Dolly Madison Library, 1244 Oak Ridge Avenue, McLean. Become a language star. Join for a fun foreign language storytime in Mandarin, Spanish, French or Arabic. No previous knowledge needed.

Learn to Draw Cartoons. 4:30 p.m. Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Learn to draw cartoons with artist Bud Little. Ages 6 and up. Please register for this program.

Kids' Book Club. 5:30 p.m. Great

Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. The incorrigible Children of Ashton Place: The Mysterious Howling by Maryrose Wood. Ages 8-12. School age.

TUESDAY/NOV. 18

Great Falls Writers Group Presents Jim Lehrer. 7 p.m. Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. The veteran newsman, playwright and author will discuss his lifetime in words and his recent novel, entitled "Top Down," about the Kennedy assassination.

CR Dance Lessons. 6:30-10:30 p.m. Colvin Run Community Hall, 10201 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. \$12 per person includes lesson and snacks. Contact Ed Cottrell at 703-435-5620 or EdCottrell@MACP.org for more information.

Imagination Yoga for Children. 2 p.m. Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. For children ages 3-5. Children will learn to unite mind and body through imaginative interaction. Simple yoga poses and adventure stories.

WEDNESDAY/NOV. 19

"Murder by Death." 1 p.m. The Alden Theatre, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The Alden, Midday Movies. Free. www.mcleancenter.org.

GFL Pokemon League. 4:30- 6 p.m. Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Come play Pokemon with your friends. School age 5 to 15.

Storytime for 3-5 Year Olds with Caregiver. 10:30 a.m. Dolly Madison Library, 1244 Oak Ridge

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 14



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CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 13

Avenue, McLean. Join for an early literacy enhanced storytime featuring stories, rhymes and songs.

Pokemon League. 4:30 p.m. Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Come play Pokemon with your friends. Ages 5-15.

THURSDAY-SATURDAY/NOV. 20-22

Brethren's 21st Annual Christmas Craft Show. Thursday and Friday: 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.; Saturday: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Oakton Church of the Brethren, 10025 Courthouse Rd., Vienna. Come browse around and find unique presents and stocking stuffers; cards and gift bags; seasonal décor; kitchen accessories; baby and children's items; scarves, hats and other attire; jewelry; pillows and linens; ceramics; fresh baked pies and cakes and much more.

THURSDAY/NOV. 20

GF Rotary Club. 7:30-8:30 a.m. River Bend Country Club, 375 Walker Road Great Falls. Great Falls Rotary Club Weekly Speaker Series. Download a membership form on their website. Open to anyone who has a personal connection to Great Falls and is interested in furthering Rotary's mission of Service Above Self.

Artists Meet for Coffee. 8:30-10 a.m. Katie's Coffeehouse, Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Local artists meet for coffee. All are welcome to drop in.

FRIDAY/NOV. 21

Quote-Along Film: "A Christmas Story." 7:30 p.m. The Alden, 1234 Ingleside Avenue, McLean. Yell along to your all-time holiday favorite. Free.

GFL Drop-In Chess. 4:30-6:30 p.m. Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Drop in chess at the Great Falls Library Meeting Room. All ages are welcome.

SATURDAY/NOV. 22

Andes Manta in Concert. 8 p.m. The Alden Theatre, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Live @ The Alden. \$20/\$15 MCC district residents. www.mcleancenter.org.

Cars & Coffee. 7-9 p.m. 760 Walker Road Great Falls. Gathering of cars at Katie's Coffeehouse. Antique, custom, hotrod, exotic, sports, etc.

CR Dance for Everyone. Colvin Run Community Hall, 10201 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. \$12 per person includes lesson dance, soda and snacks. Contact Ed Cottrell at 703-435-5620 or EdCottrell@MACP.org for more information.

SUNDAY/NOV. 23

Vienna Turkey Trot: 10K, 5K and Fun Run. 8 a.m. All proceeds benefit the James Madison High School Band and the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department. This year's Marching Band has proudly accepted an invitation to perform at the BOA Grand Nationals in Indianapolis. Come out and show your support by participating in one of the largest races in the area. Registration is now open and currently offering sponsorship opportunities. More information including registration fees and schedule can be found at www.viennaturkeytrot.com

MONDAY/NOV. 24

GFL Read to the Dog. 4:30-5:30 p.m. Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Beginning readers can practice reading to a furry friend. Call branch at 703-757-8560 to sign up.

Learn to Draw Cartoons. 4:30 p.m. Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Learn to draw cartoons with artist Bud Little. Ages 6 and up. Please register for this program.

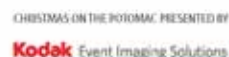


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ENTERTAINMENT

Langley High Orchestra Presents 'An Evening in Vienna'

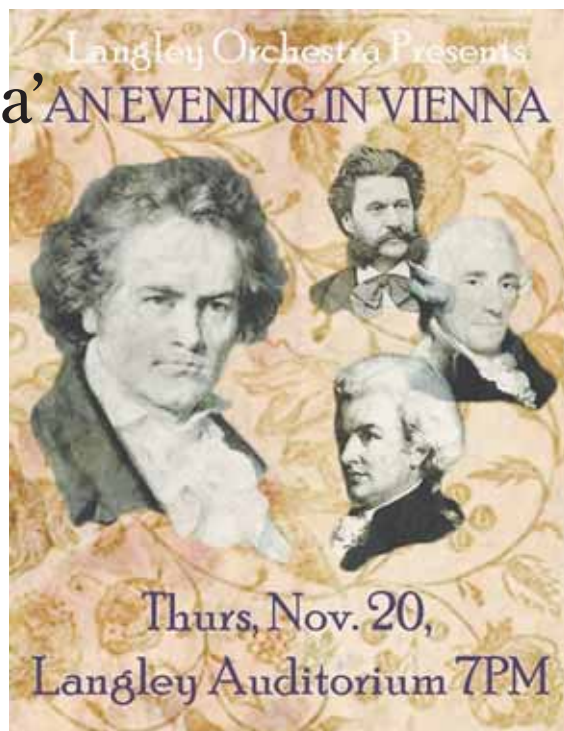
The Langley High School Orchestra will present its first concert on Thursday, Nov. 20, in the Langley High School Auditorium at 7 p.m. "An Evening in Vienna" will feature music by composers Beethoven, Mozart, von Suppe and Strauss.

Winds, brass, and percussion will include members of the band and professional mentors who will perform with the students. This side-by-side format is being made possible by a partnership between the Langley PTSA and the Langley Orchestra Society.

Junior Theron Masters will be featured in the Rondo from Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 37. Cellists Hailey Lee (senior) and Alex Lim (junior) will play the famous solo passages in "Morning, Noon, and Night in Vienna."

Elizabeth Leung will make her conducting debut with the Concert Orchestra, comprising freshmen and sophomores. Leung graduated from the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University with a bachelor's in Music Education. Currently, she teaches orchestra at both Langley HS and at Cooper MS.

Dr. Scott McCormick, the director of the orchestra program at Langley, will direct the Philharmonic and Symphonic Orchestras.



Concert artwork created by Drea George, a senior violinist at Langley High School.

The concert is free, and the public is invited. This concert is an opportunity for students in elementary and middle school to experience the excitement of the strong orchestral music program at Langley HS.

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

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**Fri. and Sat., Nov. 14 & 15, 8 p.m.
\$30/\$20 MCC district residents**

**Be Fit McLean Saturday 55+
Lecture Series
Medication Safety**

**Saturday, Nov. 15, Noon-2 p.m.
\$7/\$5 MCC district residents**

**Free Family Movie
Quote-Along
"A Christmas Story" (1983)
Friday, Nov. 21, 7:30 p.m.
Free. Reservations are not required.**

**Be Fit McLean Saturday 55+
Lecture Series
Transportation Options**

**Saturday, Nov. 22, Noon-2 p.m.
\$7/\$5 MCC district residents**

**Live @The Alden
Andes Manta in Concert
Saturday, Nov. 22, 8 p.m.
\$20/\$15 MCC district residents**

**Sunday Soirée Series Dance
"Autumn Splendor"
Sunday, Nov. 23, 3-5 p.m.
\$15 per couple/\$8 single**

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



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McLean, VA 22101
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Local REAL ESTATE

PHOTOS BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

September, 2014 Top Sales in Great Falls and McLean



1 8446 Portland Place, McLean — \$3,400,000

2 8500 Old Dominion Drive, McLean — \$2,990,000



3 1177 Orlo Drive, McLean — \$2,700,000

4 7814 Montvale Way, McLean — \$2,259,000



5 7786 Solitude Court, McLean — \$2,200,000

9 511 Jackson Tavern Way, Great Falls — \$1,600,000



10 10775 Riverscape Run, Great Falls — \$1,512,000

Address	BR	FB	HB	...	Postal	City	Sold Price	Type	Lot	AC	PostalCode	Subdivision	Date Sold
1 8446 PORTLAND PL	5	7	2		MCLEAN		\$3,400,000	Detached	0.93		22102	WOODHAVEN	09/22/14
2 8500 OLD DOMINION DR	6	7	2		MCLEAN		\$2,990,000	Detached	1.66		22102	ASHLEY	09/02/14
3 1177 ORLO DR	5	6	1		MCLEAN		\$2,700,000	Detached	0.83		22102	WOODLEA MILL	09/22/14
4 7814 MONTVALE WAY	6	6	1		MCLEAN		\$2,259,000	Detached	0.83		22102	GARFIELD PARK	09/15/14
5 7786 SOLITUDE CT	5	4	1		MCLEAN		\$2,200,000	Detached	1.31		22102	THE RESERVE	09/26/14
6 6157 TOMPKINS DR	6	6	2		MCLEAN		\$2,000,000	Detached	0.36		22101	CHESTERBROOK WOODS	09/10/14
7 6032 CRIMSON CT	5	4	1		MCLEAN		\$1,875,000	Detached	1.14		22101	SAVILE MANOR	09/17/14
8 627 POTOMAC RIVER RD	6	5	2		MCLEAN		\$1,850,000	Detached	1.01		22102	POTOMAC OVERLOOK	09/19/14
9 511 JACKSON TAVERN WAY	5	5	1		GREAT FALLS		\$1,600,000	Detached	1.72		22066	THE RIDINGS OF GREAT FALLS	09/10/14
10 10775 RIVERSCAPE RUN	5	5	1		GREAT FALLS		\$1,512,000	Detached	1.87		22066	RIVERSCAPE	09/05/14

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PHOTO COURTESY OF THE 2015 DC DESIGN HOUSE

A country estate in McLean is the 2015 location for the DC Design House.

McLean Location for 2015 DC Design House

House will benefit Children's National Health System.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

The new country estate at 956 Mackall Farm Lane in McLean will be the location for the 8th annual DC Design House, a project that raises money to benefit Children's National Health System. The 2015 DC Design House will be held from April 11 to May 10.

"We're excited to have found such a wonderful location and partner for the 2015 DC Design House," said Skip Singleton, co-founder of the DC Design House. "The new home by Artisan Builders is a charming old farmhouse-style home in McLean, our first venture into Virginia, with many rooms for our team of designers to decorate."

Built by Artisan Builders and designed by Harrison Design, the 8,869-square-foot home replicates an old American farmhouse. The home is reminiscent of a Virginia countryside home, but offers modern amenities. The interior floor plan is an L shape, which was popular among early farmers because of the ease and efficiency of adding future rooms.

"My partners and I are truly thrilled that Artisan Builders' new old farmhouse in McLean, Va., has been selected as the 2015 DC Design House," said Stephen Yeonas of Artisan Builders. "Our entire team is committed to making the event the best ever, while helping a great cause, Children's National Health System."

THIS MODERN FARMHOUSE offers light-filled interior rooms that blend old elements, such as re-

claimed wood and antiques, with new features, including top-of-the-line kitchen appliances.

A gallery finished with stone from an old Virginia farmhouse and a library paneled in quarter-sawn oak are among the vintage touches. The exterior features covered porches, antique style lighting, and natural stone in a random, hand-cut pattern. Landscape design is by Fine Landscapes and sales by Yeonas & Shafran Real Estate.

Some of the area's top designers previewed more than 20 rooms in the three-level home, which includes first floor formal and family foyers, dining and living rooms, library, kitchen, breakfast room, family room, mudroom and front and rear covered porches. Among the rooms on the upper level are a master suite with reading nook and three secondary suites, while the lower level offers a bistro and bar, media and game rooms, and an additional bedroom and bath.

"We'll be announcing designers by the end of November," said Susan Hayes Long, chair of the DC Design House, "and we're sure the 8th annual DC Design House will continue our tradition of exceptionally innovative designs and inspiration, all while raising money for our beneficiary: Children's National Health System."

The interior designers create presentation boards, which show how they would design the home. Volunteer staff choose the designers who will donate their time and talent to transform the house into a showcase home.

The DC Design House began in 2008 as an event for the DC Metro area in which top area designers showcased their talents in a "flowing design home" to raise funds for a local charity. What began as a single event goal to raise funds for Children's National Health System, formerly Children's National Medical Center, has developed into an annual residential design attraction and fundraiser.

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Health

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tion visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices/vicap.htm or call 703-790-0123, TTY 711.

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21 Announcements

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and Beer On Premises/Mixed
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to sell or manufacture
alcoholic beverages.
Andrius Pranskevicius,
Managing Member
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Excuse Me



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Early on during my indoctrination/assimilation into the cancer-patient world in which I now reside, I remember asking a fellow cancer patient/friend if I could use cancer as an excuse for whatever it was needed excusing (directly or indirectly related), and she said: absolutely, "blame the cancer." Years later, after a chemotherapy infusion, I saw my oncologist walking through the Infusion Center and asked him if my thinning hair might be a result of this most recent chemotherapy drug (not all chemotherapy results in hair loss). His response was similar to what my friend had advised me in 2009. He said: "You can blame me," (which of course, I understood to mean, cancer/the treatment of cancer) "for anything."

Now, I have to tell you, having such an acceptable, ready-made, beyond-reproach kind of excuse such as cancer as the reason for anything you want to do/don't want to do/can't do, etc., is incredibly tempting. It's almost like having a super power, a power which cannot be questioned or compromised in any way. And quite frankly, conjures a wide range of emotions/reactions; from one perspective, it places the cancer patient in a position of strength, and on the other, creates a kind dependence that is hard to resist. My fear has always been that relying on cancer too much as an excuse somehow weakens the immune system and so I have been hesitant to use its power. Can you say slippery slope?

As an example: if "the dog ate my homework" became an acceptable excuse, one would use it as such until it no longer passed muster; and as we all know, eventually it doesn't pass anything. However, cancer as an excuse – in my experience, will always pass muster and then some. Moreover, the seriousness of it will likely prevent the patient from ever having to answer any show-proof type questions: "Show me your port." "Name your most recent chemotherapy cocktail." "How long does a typical infusion last?" As a consequence, the potential for use and abuse is almost overwhelming.

Nevertheless, in spite of the temptation, I have rarely used my disease as an excuse for anything, other than when it was obvious by my appearance – during heavy duty chemotherapy – that I was unavailable, shall we say. It always felt as if I might be manipulating situations if I were to start using "cancer" as an excuse; as believable and understandable an excuse as it was/is. It's so easy. So unquestioned. No one is going to ask: "Really?" "Are you throwing up that much?" "Are you sure you can't get out of bed?" Besides, I haven't wanted to give in to my cancer whereby it begins to control my life more than the regular medical appointments, lab work, diagnostic scans, infusions and the 40+ pills I ingest and restricted diet already do. I've wanted to maintain some control and try not to become a victim of my own circumstances. Easier said than done, I assure you.

But I have persevered and survived five years and nearly nine months. Through a combination of good genes, a healthier lifestyle and diet, a variety of non-traditional alternatives/supplements and a bit of blind luck, not to mention a super-positive attitude which I inherited from my father, life goes on. However, if anything goes wrong, I know who/what to blame: "cancer." It wasn't anything I said or did. In a way, there's comfort in having such a good excuse. Unfortunate, certainly, but very convenient.

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

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