

## 95 Express Lanes Open

NEWS, PAGE 3

Santa Claus visits with (clockwise from bottom right) Eli Thomas, 4; Daniel Ramos, 3 and mom Susana Ramos holding son Eric, 1. Children enjoyed lunch with Santa, Christmas music and holiday crafts, Saturday, Dec. 6, at the Sherwood Center in Fairfax.

# Christmas Cookies, Carols and Crafts

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## Protecting Dogs in the City of Fairfax

NEWS, PAGE 2

DECEMBER 18-24, 2014

ONLINE AT [WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](http://WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM)





**Elated local animal-advocates surround Police Chief Carl Pardiny after the Fairfax City Council adopted a tethering ordinance.**



**With a little help from his furry friends and animal advocates, Mayor Scott Silverthorne signs the tethering ordinance into law, Monday, Dec. 15.**

# Protecting Dogs in the City of Fairfax

**City Council passes one-hour maximum tethering ordinance.**

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

**W**hen the Fairfax City Council last week passed one of the most stringent tethering laws in the state, it pleased many residents and animal advocates.

"It's the culmination of a year's worth of work," said Fairfax resident Tim Parmly, who directs an equine-welfare group. "It's an ordinance much-needed to protect the dogs in this City."

Under the new ordinance, companion animals can't be tethered, tied or chained for more than one hour a day between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. And tethering between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. is prohibited altogether.

Animals under 4 months old or who are sick or injured may not be tethered, at all; and no animals may be tethered in temperatures higher than 90 degrees or less than 32 degrees. A \$50 civil penalty will be assessed for the first violation; anyone found guilty of second or subsequent violations may be fined up to \$250.

**IN SEPTEMBER**, Arlington County's Animal Control Chief Alice Burton said her county passed an ordinance last year prohibiting tethering for more than three hours a day. "Tethering leads to aggression, barking and health problems," she said. "And barking upsets neighbors, who may retaliate against the dog."

Shelley Feeley, with the Fairfax County Humane Society, also urged City Council to adopt a tethering limit. "Dogs are social animals needing daily exercise, affection and attention," she said. "Leaving animals tied up for long hours is cruel and also causes loneliness and sadness. Man's best friend deserves better than being tied up at the end of a chain."

At a subsequent Council work session, Police Chief Carl Pardiny – who was the



PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

**Flanked by dogs and animal advocates, Mayor Scott Silverthorne holds up the tethering ordinance he signed into law, Monday, Dec. 15.**

City's first K-9 officer – continued the discussion. He said tethering lets a dog run and play without running away. But it can be abusive if the tether is too short or if there's extreme weather.

"Dogs tethered over a long time learn to protect that small area and become more aggressive," said Pardiny. "They don't get enough socialization, the ground becomes worn and muddy and, without proper care, that dog could become infected with parasites and diseases."

He said it would help to have an ordinance in place in advance of possible future problems, as people are living closer and closer together. "In the City of Fairfax, we've had a total of 13 complaints over two years, involving seven residents," said Pardiny. "In every case, we received compliance or the owner gave up the dog."

He said the ordinance would also enable law enforcement to take legal action when warranted, if the animal owner didn't comply voluntarily. And it would ensure that cases of abuse were properly tracked and investigated.

Pardiny also recommended an internal policy with graduated, response guidelines detailing "how our officers and animal-con-

**"Leaving animals tied up for long hours is cruel."**

— Shelley Feeley, Fairfax County Humane Society

trol officers will respond to complaints and follow-up complaints about the same person. Education would be our focus, but we could take the appropriate action, if necessary."

**THE GOAL**, he said, is "to prevent the cruel and inhumane treatment of animals, and there's a lot of support from residents and animal-rescue groups for such an ordinance. And since we now have another animal-control officer, we have the resources to enforce it."

Mayor Scott Silverthorne said he'd support the ordinance, and Councilwoman Nancy Loftus called it a good idea that "adds clarity for people who want to tether their animals, but not cross the line toward not properly caring for them."

Then last Tuesday, Dec. 9, it was time for action; and at the outset of the public hearing, the proposed ordinance before the

Council limited tethering to no more than three hours a day. Sue Bell, founder of Palmer Animal Rescue, thanked the City and Pardiny for tackling this issue and understanding that how animals are treated matters.

"People who tether their dogs think it's acceptable and normal," said

Feeley. "But with ordinances like this, thinking and action can change. This is important for the City of Fairfax and can be a sunbeam of hope for other Virginia counties."

Councilman David Meyer then made a motion to approve the ordinance. However, adding that he'd "personally like to see a total ban on tethering in the City," he amended his motion to reduce the allowable tethering period per day to just one hour. Councilman Michael DeMarco seconded it.

Councilwoman Janice Miller favored three hours, saying some people "may have physical issues precluding them" from moving their animals to get exercise. But Councilman Jeff Greenfield suggested authorizing the city manager to extend the one-hour provision for those physically unable to comply with it. And Loftus said they should "leave it at three hours and see how it plays out."

They then voted 3-3 on the amendment, with Silverthorne voting for it to break the tie. The main motion to have the ordinance, at all, also passed.

Afterward, Parmly's wife Natalia, of the Fairchester Woods community, said that "several years ago, there was a dog tethered all the time in our neighborhood. That was the impetus for all of this, and Sue Bell – who's also with the Virginia Humane society – was a great help to us."

Delighted with the Council's action, her husband Tim said, "I'm so happy that this happened and, hopefully, it'll set up a domino effect with other jurisdictions in Northern Virginia. And I'm pleased that they offered an amendment because tethering is just terrible for dogs, and one hour is plenty. Dogs need to be treated like family, and Chief Pardiny has been a wonderful supporter of this. It's a great victory."



# 95 Express Lanes Open Transportation project culminates after a decade and four governors.

BY ABIGAIL CONSTANTINO  
THE CONNECTION

**T**he 95 express lanes opened on Sunday, Dec. 14, after a decade of planning and since breaking ground almost two years ago. Gov. Terry McAuliffe—joined by Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx, members of the Fairfax, Prince William, and Stafford counties board of supervisors, and representatives from VDOT and Transurban—cut the ribbon on Wednesday, Dec. 10 in Alexandria. Drivers will have two weeks of free use before tolling starts on Monday, Dec. 29.

McAuliffe praised the work of all involved in the project, especially the people who moved the dirt and poured the asphalt, “We wouldn’t be here today,” without them he said. He extolled the private-public partnership (P3) of VDOT, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and Transurban, which made the completion of the project possible. “P3s are great but only if they are negotiated in a way that puts taxpayers first and holds people accountable,” he said. He reminded the crowd of the failed P3 on Route 460 in southeastern Virginia with US 460 Mobility Partners in 2012, which was halted last March amid environmental permit and cost concerns. Between \$400 to \$500 million of state money went into the Route 460 P3 without ever breaking ground.

Virginia Secretary of Transportation Aubrey Layne said that unlocking congestion in key economic corridors is part of the governor’s plan. The express lanes will allow for diversification of businesses and tourism, said McAuliffe. “When Virginia grows, America grows,” he said.

Quality of life and giving people options and choices are the rewards for commuters. Stafford County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jack Cavalier said that the express lanes are important to the quality of life for the thousands of Stafford County residents who make the daily trek to work in Northern Virginia.

Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock) said that the lanes give another option of how people can move around. “You can actually live down in Prince William, even Stafford County, and have a job in Tysons Corner and be able to get to work. That wasn’t the case before.”

“Whether you gotta get home to your kid or whether you have a critical work appointment, it gives you a choice in how to get there,” said Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield).

Senator Warner echoed the sentiment saying that he has seen the commute go from “two hours to forever,” and that the completion of this project is a “great day for Northern Virginia and the Commonwealth.”

Though the express lanes will not solve all the problems with congestion, construction manager for the project John Morse,



**Senator Mark Warner shares his plans to find permanent funding source for transportation and national infrastructure financing during the 95 Express Lanes opening ceremony on Wednesday, Dec. 10.**



**Transurban CEO Scott Charlton, left, with Gov. Terry McAuliffe, says that his company is passionate about transportation structure and its impact on the community.**



**Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield), left, and Gov. Terry McAuliffe attend the opening ceremony of the 95 express lanes on Wednesday, Dec. 10 in Alexandria.**



**Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock) believes that the immediate impact of the express lanes will be great and its long-term impact “incredibly great,” as people get choices in traffic mobility.**

of VDOT, said that the addition of a third lane will solve a number of problems and give people options other than waiting in traffic. “People will have some freedom to do some things they couldn’t do otherwise,” he said, such as having the ability to bypass areas of heavy congestion, thus facilitating work schedule and personal life.

Secretary Foxx said that Virginia is on the path of a “growth tsunami”—with a projected 100,000,000 increase in population in the southeast region of the U.S.—and its completion of the 95 express lanes, funded in part by a \$300 million TIFIA loan from the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, is a step to get ahead of population growth.

Still, Foxx said that “we are woefully under investing in the infrastructure of this country.” A blow to future investments is the Federal Highway Trust Fund shortfall announced by Sen. Warner. “We at the federal level have work to do,” said Warner, such as permanent funding source for transportation and national infrastructure financing that fall under the Grow America Act, a \$302 billion transportation proposal.



**U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx attends the 95 express lanes opening ceremony on Wednesday, Dec. 10 in Alexandria. He said that Virginia should be a “model for the rest of the country for its infrastructure projects.”**

But at the opening celebration, everyone is proud of the work completed on the 95 express lanes. “Some people are here tak-

## Learn More

[http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ipd/project\\_profiles/va\\_i95.aspx](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ipd/project_profiles/va_i95.aspx)  
<http://www.95expresslanes.com/>

<http://www.vamegaprojects.com/about-megaprojects/i-95-hov-hot-lanes/>

ing credit for projects they didn’t like,” joked Sen. Tim Kaine. Senator Warner quipped about naming opportunities for sections of the lanes. Secretary Foxx wondered that with so many governors of Virginia in attendance whether Thomas Jefferson was present somewhere.

Virginia State Police Sgt. Alex Willey and his fellow officers are prepared when tolling starts on Monday, Dec. 29. They underwent extra training in the new gantry system and the way the tolls operate. “It’s going to be interesting when it opens,” he said. But they are prepared.

Commuters should also be prepared. “The countdown is on,” said Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova, who urged commuters to get their EZ Pass today.

PHOTOS BY ABIGAIL CONSTANTINO/THE CONNECTION



## HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

# Cameron's Chocolates Has Scrumptious Gifts

Store in Fairfax Circle Shopping Center employs people with intellectual disabilities.

BY STEVE HIBBARD  
THE CONNECTION

Looking for holiday gift ideas of hand-dipped chocolates and fresh-baked-from-scratch muffins, try Cameron's Coffee and Chocolates located in the Fairfax Circle Shopping Center. Owners Jim and Ellen Graham of McLean named their store, which opened Oct. 1, 2013, after their daughter Cameron, 24, who has intellectual disabilities.

"We determined there was no place to get a cup of coffee around here. So now we do coffee, muffins, baked goods and make two sandwiches," said Ellen Graham, who has a master's in finance and was a banker for 17 years.

The store is unique in that it employs four full-time and six part-time people with intellectual disabilities. Employees with intellectual disabilities work alongside others who don't have them. There is a production board with a list of jobs that changes every day, so the work is a mixture of different tasks. The employees are not just working in isolation with other disabled workers.

"We believe that people with intellectual disabilities are capable of so much, that they are like everyone else, that so much of their self-worth and self sufficiency comes from having real expectations by having a job and a place to work, and being part of a larger community," said Ellen Graham.

"Ellen and I set out to create a work envi-



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

**Jim and Ellen Graham with daughter Cameron, for whom Cameron's Chocolates was named.**

ronment where everybody was involved with the buying public," said Jim Graham, who has an MBA in marketing. "Cameron just loves people. She's high energy. She's the spokesperson for the business in a lot of cases. And it's one of the things that sets us apart." Cameron attended the Davis Training Center, which is part of Marshall High School, where she learned different job skills.

**FOR HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS**, Cameron's offers hand-dipped chocolate nonpareils, which is French for "nothing equal," and sell for \$1.50. A four-piece box of chocolates goes for \$5, and you can pick from an assortment of 30 different flavors.

Hand-dipped marshmallows are dipped in white chocolate and rolled in colored sugar for 75 cents. Three different bars of chocolate are available: white chocolate oreo, toffee milk chocolate and dark chocolate almond cherry, for \$7.95 each.

Chocolate and peppermint bark, harvest bark with cardamom bark with candied ginger, and pumpkin seeds are both \$11 for eight ounces. "This one is so popular that we literally can't keep them in stock," said Ellen Graham.

For cookies, choose from a variety of flavors in a cookie platter: chocolate chip, chocolate crinkles, snickerdoodles, sugar cookie cutouts, triple ginger, oatmeal white chip cranberry, monster cookies, which is oatmeal, peanut butter, Reese's pieces and chocolate chips.

Gluten-friendly items include brownies with ground-toasted hazelnuts for \$1.50; coconut macaroons that sell for 70 cents, and peanut butter cookie for 70 cents. "We have people who drive from Alexandria, Bethesda, and Washington, D.C., to get those gluten friendly brownies," said Jim Graham.

The menu rotates in and out with the season. "We have pumpkin muffins in the fall; in August we have apple cinnamon streusel; cranberry orange in Christmas; lemon muffins for Easter; and blueberry and strawberry in the summer time," said Ellen Graham.

There is a whole array of gift baskets from \$16 to \$25, which includes a travel mug, coffee and a jumbo marsh pop.

For the tea drinkers, try 12 tea sticks in an insulated glass that sells for \$16. Choose from a selection of high tea blend, Earl Grey,



PHOTO BY STEVE HIBBARD/THE CONNECTION

**Ellen Graham holds a batch of pumpkin muffins.**

mango black tea, pineapple black, passion black, as well as cardamom black teas. There's also peach green, jasmine green, pomegranate white, mint medley, ruby raspberry and chamomile blend.

Whole quiche pies are available for special order like vegetable with spinach and roasted red peppers, and bacon cheddar for \$20, or \$5.95 per slice.

Caprese breads are made with sundried tomatoes, basil and mozzarella, spicy jalapeno cheddar, and pesto breads are available for \$13.95 for a loaf.

**FOR DRINKS**, they specialize in coffee, espressos, hot chocolate, and an array of smoothies (strawberry, wild berry, mango, and peach). Frozen yogurt is available in the summer time.

"I stumbled upon this little place and I really enjoy supporting local business," said Kelly Sullivan of Fairfax. "I think it has a great cause. The food and candy is delicious and much better than any mass produced food that you get at a Starbucks or Dunkin' Donuts. It's much better quality."

"It's a great place," said Margaret Edie of Fairfax. "I like the employees and that they work with the disabled. The hot chocolate that I had at the Fall Festival was divine."

Cameron's Chocolates is open Mondays through Fridays, from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and weekends from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The store is at 9639 Fairfax Blvd., Fairfax, VA 22030. Call 703-278-2627 or visit [www.every1canwork.com](http://www.every1canwork.com).



PHOTO BY STEVE HIBBARD/THE CONNECTION

**A selection of chocolate gift bags from Cameron's Chocolates.**



## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

**Fairfax County** is offering a free Telephone Support Group for Family Caregivers of Older Adults. Join us for this open discussion. This telephone support group may be just what you need! Share your experiences, gain support and get important information without having to travel. The one-hour free sessions are scheduled for the second Tuesday of each month beginning at 7 p.m. Find out more and register at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices/) and click on Caregiver Telephone Support Group.

**Fairfax County** needs volunteers to drive older adults to medical appointments and wellness programs Reston area. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults) and click on Volunteer Solutions.

**Volunteers, fluent in American Sign Language**, are needed in Reston, Herndon and Vienna. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults) and click on Volunteer Solutions.

**Meals on Wheels** needs drivers in Chantilly, McLean, Mt. Vernon, and Clifton on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults) and click on Volunteer Solutions.

**The Lewinsville Senior Center in McLean** needs instructors for the following classes: Certified Arthritis Exercise, Ballroom Dance, Square Dance, Knitting/Crocheting, Bridge and American Mah Jongg. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults) and click on Volunteer Solutions.

The **Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program** needs volunteer advocates for residents in assisted living and nursing facilities. Training is provided in March. Call 703-324-5861, TTY 711 or email [Lisa.Callahan@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Lisa.Callahan@fairfaxcounty.gov). Find more information on the program at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ltc](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ltc).

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

**The Wakefield Senior Center** in Annandale needs a Chair Exercise Instructor and Bilingual English/Spanish Activity Leaders. They also need 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](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults) and click on Volunteer Solutions.

**The Hollin Hall Senior Center** in Alexandria needs a DJ to provide a wide array of music from ballroom to line dancing and a Ballroom Dance Instructor. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults) and click on Volunteer Solutions.

**The Sully Senior Center** in Centreville needs a certified personal trainer, preferably with experience working with older adults. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults) and click on Volunteer Solutions.

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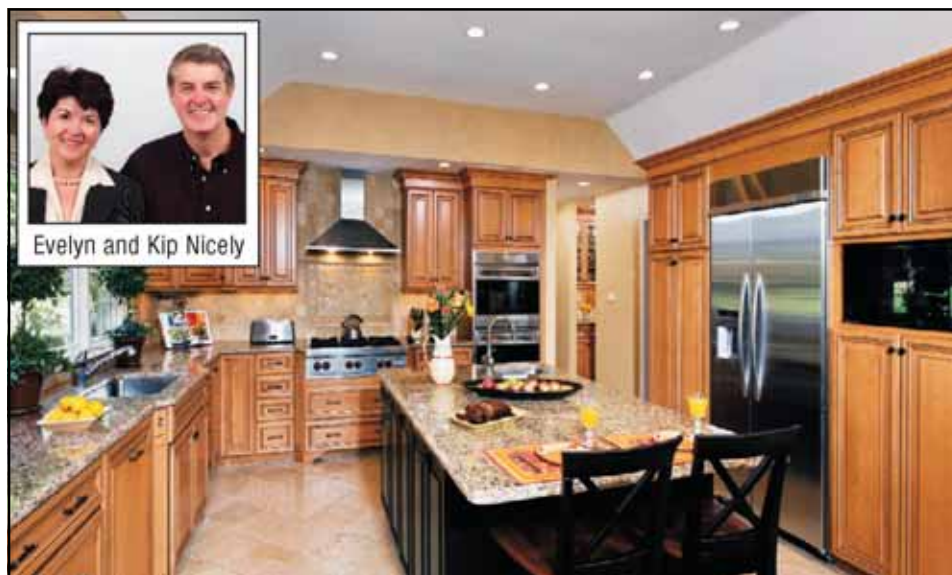
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# OPINION

## Holidays Are for Giving

In the scramble to finish Christmas shopping, remember tens of thousands of local children are short of food as well as presents.

The holidays are for giving. Christmas and Hanukkah are about children and family, about sharing, about joy, about being thankful and about faith and appreciation.

Here in Northern Virginia, many of us see few signs of families in need as we go about our daily lives and holiday shopping. Our neighborhoods are largely segregated economically; we mostly see the people who are most like ourselves economically.

But in Fairfax County, about 65,000 people live below the poverty line, about 6 percent. In Arlington and Alexandria, more than 8 percent of the population lives in poverty, about 18,000 people in Arlington and more than 12,000 people in Alexandria.

### WHERE TO GIVE LOCALLY IN FAIRFAX COUNTY

In no particular order:

- ❖ **Our Daily Bread's Holiday Program** helps those in need with food for the holidays and gifts for their children. Donations are still needed, go to [www.odbfairfax.com/holiday](http://www.odbfairfax.com/holiday)
- ❖ **Cornerstones**, 11150 Sunset Hills Road, Suite 210, Reston, serving Reston and Herndon. 571-323-9555, [www.cornerstonesva.org](http://www.cornerstonesva.org). Programs and services include the Embury Rucker Community Shelter, Emergency Food Pantry, Hypothermia Prevention Program and the Thanksgiving Food Drive.
- ❖ **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](mailto:volunteer@facetscares.org).

To be clear, the poverty line is \$19,780 for a family of three; it's \$11,670 for a single person household. Imagine for a minute how far \$20,000 a year would go in your family. To live in Northern Virginia, a family needs to earn about twice the rate of poverty to get by. The median household income in Fairfax County and Arlington is well over \$100,000.

In Fairfax County Public Schools, more than 52,000 students, or more than 28 percent, are poor enough to receive free or subsidized meals, a significant measure of poverty.

In Arlington more than 32 percent of the students are poor enough to receive free or subsidized meals; that's 7,452 students at last count.

In Alexandria, more than 8,500 students are poor enough to receive free or subsidized

meals. That's 60 percent of the 14,222 students enrolled.

These are children who may not be sure that they will have a meal between the meals they get in school. School holidays can bring uncertainty and hunger, a far cry from the celebrations, gifts and plenty that we associate with Christmas, Hanukkah and winter holiday vacations.

Many of these are children are living in families who must choose between medical bills, car repair, heat and food. Almost all are families where at least one adult is employed full time, but still many are one unexpected expense away from disaster. Many of these families live on the brink of homelessness.

There are literally hundreds, probably thousands, of ways to give locally this season. Also mark your calendar to help again in a month or two. The needs don't go away after the holidays. Here are a few ideas.

— MARY KIMM,

[MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](mailto:MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM)

[admin@echo-inc.org](mailto:admin@echo-inc.org) 7205 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. Provides food and financial assistance to those in short-term emergencies, and provides clothing and household goods to low income families, helping more than 5,000 people last year. [www.echo-inc.org](http://www.echo-inc.org).

❖ **Lorton Community Action Center**, now collecting gift cards and food baskets for Christmas, drop off on Dec. 20, 2014. Also operates Lorton's Attic, 9506 Richmond Highway (U.S. Route 1), Lorton, VA 22079 703-339-5161 703-339-8611 [www.lortonaction.org](http://www.lortonaction.org).

❖ **Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Washington Fairfax Area** operates clubs in two of the neediest areas of the county, Culmore and the Route 1 corridor, focusing on character and academic success. <http://www.bgcgw.org/fairfax/>

❖ **Office to End and Prevent Homelessness** has a strategic road map to prevent and end homelessness, created by the Planning Committee to End Homelessness, in partnership with the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church, government agencies, nonprofits, faith communities and businesses. <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/homeless/>

❖ **12 Ways of Giving**: Fairfax County Office of Public Private Partnerships' "12 Ways of Giving" campaign is an annual event that showcases many ways for meaningful, local giving during the holiday season, highlighting nonprofits in Fairfax County. [www.fairfaxcountypartnerships.org](http://www.fairfaxcountypartnerships.org)

❖ **Assistance League of Northern Virginia** is an all-volunteer organization that clothes, feeds, educates and nurtures those in need focusing five of the neediest elementary schools. Volunteers and donors are always needed. Contact [ALNorthernVA@yahoo.com](mailto:ALNorthernVA@yahoo.com) or see [www.northernvirginia.assistanceleague.org](http://www.northernvirginia.assistanceleague.org)

❖ **Comfort for America's Uniformed Services (CAUSE)** — organizes programs that promote recreation, relaxation and resiliency for members of the U.S. Armed Services recuperating from injuries received in support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. 4114 Legato Road Suite B, Fairfax, VA 22033, 703-591-4968, [cause-usa.org](http://www.cause-usa.org)

❖ **National Capital Food Bank**, 6833 Hill Park Drive, Lorton, serving all of Northern Virginia, 703-541-3063. [www.capitalareafoodbank.org](http://www.capitalareafoodbank.org)

❖ **Western Fairfax Christian Ministries** — food pantry at 13981 Metrotech Drive in Chantilly (near Backyard Grill and Bar). For more information or to sponsor a family, call 703-988-9656, ext. 105. To mail gift cards or send donations by check, add a note saying "food basket program" and send them to: WFCM, P.O. Box 220802, Chantilly, VA 20153. 703-988-9656. <http://www.wfcmvva.org/>

❖ **Touching Heart** in Herndon is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to educate children to have giving hearts. <http://www.touchingheart.com>, 703-901-7355

❖ **Bethany House** provides emergency shelter and supportive services to victims of domestic violence throughout Northern Virginia. [www.bhmv.org](http://www.bhmv.org), 6121 Lincolnia Road, Suite 303, Alexandria, VA 22312, 703-658-9500. See <http://www.bhmv.org/getinvolved1/> for a list of needed items.

[www.facetscares.org](http://www.facetscares.org). 10640 Page Avenue, Suite 300, Fairfax VA 22030

❖ **HealthWorks for Northern Virginia**, formerly the Jeanie Schmidt Free Clinic, provides medical, dental and behavioral health care to anyone in need, regardless of age or ability to pay. Herndon location, 1141 Elden St. Third Floor, Herndon, VA 20170, 703-481-8160 <http://hwnova.org/>

❖ **Alternative House** — Abused and Homeless Children's Refuge, 2100 Gallows Road, Vienna, VA 22182, 703-506-9191. [www.thealternativehouse.org](http://www.thealternativehouse.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](http://www.SHAREofMcLean.org)

❖ **Committee for Helping Others (CHO)**, Vienna, organized in 1969 by a group of concerned churches and individuals in the Dunn Loring, Merrifield, Oakton, Vienna community to provide simple, loving charity to those in need. 703-281-7614 <http://www.cho-va.com>

❖ **Fairfax City Area FISH** (For Immediate Sympathetic Help), working with the Office of Coordinated Services Planning, Fairfax County Department of Human Services, FISH helps local citizens who are in temporary need of basic necessities such as food, clothing, and financial assistance for rent, mortgage payments, utilities, and medical treatments. 703-222-0880 <http://fairfaxfish.org/>

❖ **Herndon-Reston FISH** (For Immediate Sympathetic Help), 336 Victory Drive, Herndon, 703-391-0105 Also operates thrift store, The Bargain Loft, 336 Victory Drive, Herndon, 20170, 703-437-0600 <http://herndonrestonfish.org>

❖ **Lamb Center**, [www.thelambcenter.org](http://www.thelambcenter.org). Day center for homeless, Fairfax 703-691-3178

❖ **Northern Virginia Family Service**, providing gift cards and toys for 1,700 of Northern Virginia's neediest families this season. 10455 White Granite Drive Suite 100, Oakton, VA 22124 703-385-3267 <http://www.nvfs.org/>

❖ **United Community Ministries**, providing services to prevent homelessness, keep the utilities on, help with food insecurity and more. Mount Vernon, 703-768-7106, 7511 Fordson Road, Alexandria, 22306 <http://www.ucmagency.org/>

❖ **Food for Others**, largest distributor of free food directly to people in need in Northern Virginia, plus provides a safety net for people who suddenly face unforeseen emergencies such as a family illness or the loss of a job or spouse. 2938 Prosperity Ave., Fairfax, VA 22031, 703-207-9173. [www.foodforothers.org](http://www.foodforothers.org)

❖ **Ecumenical Community Helping Others (ECHO)**, 703-569-9160,



# 476

days since a still-unnamed Fairfax County police officer shot unarmed John Geer standing in the doorway of Geer's home in Springfield, then let him bleed to death on Aug. 29, 2013. No information has been released about the incident, officers involved not named, no explanation, no grand jury, no charges. (as of Dec. 10, 2014)

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## COMMENTARY

# Helping People without Homes

BY PAMELA L. MICHELL  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
NEW HOPE HOUSING

**T**he weather has turned colder and the holidays are in full swing, which means it's the time of year when people ask "what can we do for the homeless now that it's so cold?" Or "how can we help the homeless have a good Christmas?" For those of us working with men, women, and children who are experiencing homelessness, the great community interest in December in those we serve can be heartwarming — and overwhelming. Overwhelming because we are inundated by your extraordinary generosity during this time. But heartwarming, because you are thinking about the persons in our program as individuals; as people with their own holiday dreams.

In my 30-plus years in homeless services, one of my pet peeves is the phrase "the homeless." When we use that phrase we unknowingly dehumanize the people we describe. We are also inaccurately lumping together a diverse group of people under one label as though they are all the same with the same needs. Nothing could be further from the truth. They are individuals, each with a unique story. They are children. They are mothers and fathers. They are veterans. They are people from all walks of life. The one thing they have in common is not having a permanent address.

At New Hope Housing, we don't help the Homeless, we don't house the Homeless, we don't serve the Homeless, we don't work for the Homeless, because here, we don't believe the Homeless exist. We serve people. And sometimes people experience homelessness. We believe homelessness is something that happens to you. Our job at New Hope Housing — and the job of our nonprofit partners — is to prevent that experience from happening, or if it does happen, making it as short as possible by helping get people back into appropriate permanent housing.

We at New Hope Housing, and our partners, as well as the families and single adults in our programs, are truly grateful for your support in filling a holiday wish list, providing a meal, volunteering at one of the many hypothermia sites, or donating money to help our agencies end the homelessness of each person who walks through our doors. We will still need you on Dec. 26 and Feb. 5 and during the summer. Until each person is home, we've all got work to do.

Thank you for making this person-to-person connection this holiday season. Thank you for seeing that those who seek our assistance are not "the homeless," but men, women, and children with hopes and dreams, just like each of us who are blessed with a place to call home. Because there is no place like home — anytime of the year.

## Write

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

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# 'The American Dream'

The story of success via hard work makes the book a good gift.

By SAL RUIBAL  
THE CONNECTION

Merrifield Garden Center has been a magnet for Northern Virginia gardeners since the store was founded by entrepreneurs and friends Bob Warhurst and Buddy Williams in the Merrifield area of Fairfax County in 1971. Since then, the company has expanded to two more stores in Northern Virginia: Fair Oaks in Fairfax and Gainesville in Prince William County.

The Merrifield stores are famous for their holiday displays, which attract thousands of excited shoppers looking for the perfect Christmas tree, wreaths, ornaments and other holiday accoutrements. There's even a one-of-a-kind "Merrifield Bow" that appears on hundreds of wreaths, swags and garland throughout the area.

This year, another special Merrifield item was created, but this one was made to last longer than the holiday season.

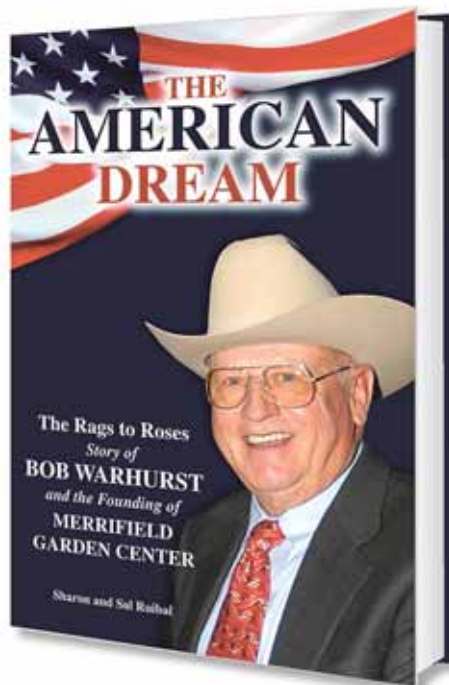
**BOB WARHURST**, 76, wanted to share the story of his hard-knock life from his birth in rural Alabama during the Great Depression to his current position as co-owner of Merrifield Garden Center. To write and research his book, Bob turned to seasoned professional writers: Me, Sal Ruibal, and my wife Sharon. Sharon is director of communications at Merrifield Garden Center. We are both former USA TODAY reporters with many years of experience writing about interesting people and what makes them tick.

I was especially interested in Bob's amazing personal story. The more I learned about this man, the more I wanted to know. He truly has a rags to riches story, so it made sense to title the book, "The American Dream: The Rags to Roses Story of Bob Warhurst and the Founding of Merrifield Garden Center."

While Bob is at the center of the story, it is also a journey shared by the Williams family, co-owners of Merrifield. The bond between the two families was important to their collective success.

We wanted to give readers insight into Bob's poor, but happy boyhood in Russellville, Ala., where he got his first job at the age of seven to help put food on the table. Bob quit school in the middle of the eighth grade and moved to Northern Virginia to make his way in life. The book reveals Bob's many adventures in post-World War II Washington, D.C., where he found that the land of opportunity was always open to the brave and the hardworking.

Washington, D.C., and the neighboring states of Virginia and Maryland enjoyed unprecedented growth in those giddy years. Longtime residents will recognize



**The American Dream: The Rags to Roses Story of Bob Warhurst and the Founding of Merrifield Garden Center, available now.**

names and places such as Shirley Highway, Hot Shoppes, Pizza Fair, The Southern Ramblers hot rod club and so much more in the book.

In late November, "The American Dream" became available online at [merrifieldgardencenter.com](http://merrifieldgardencenter.com) and at the three Merrifield Garden Center stores. After just three weekends of book signings, more than 400 copies were sold.

"I can't believe all these people want to read my book," Bob says. "Many of these people I've never seen before."

**AN INTERESTING PATTERN** began to unfold. People who had purchased the book returned to buy more books for family members, saying that Bob's message of hard work, self reliance, perseverance and family values made it the ideal holiday present for their children, some of whom were struggling with finding their way in life. Some parents, with tears in their eyes, thanked Bob for giving them a way to express their own concern for their children's future while also showing a path to success.

"First, get up early and work as hard as you can," Bob says. "Stay late. Come home tired. Take a shower and feel refreshed. Eat and get ready to go again."

It is a routine his own kids know well. When customers visit any of the three Merrifield Garden Center stores, they are bound to bump into a Warhurst. After 43 years, Bob and his wife Billie Jean still work and are joined by 22 family members, many in key positions in the business.

Copies of "The American Dream: The Rags to Roses Story of Bob Warhurst and the Founding of Merrifield Garden Center" are available online and at their three stores: Merrifield, Fair Oaks and Gainesville. Go to [merrifieldgardencenter.com](http://merrifieldgardencenter.com) to view the book trailer.

## COMMUNITY

# Giving Birth a Chance

Nativity volunteers send 700 clean childbirth kits to Haiti.

By TIM PETERSON  
THE CONNECTION

Meg Hanrahan of Burke and Melinda Engelbrektsson of Fairfax Station have each faced life-threatening complications with childbirth. Thanks to the medical resources available to them and "the grace of God," said Engelbrektsson, they and their children survived. Many women in third world countries including Haiti don't have the same opportunity.

"If I'd been in Haiti, we both would've been dead," said Engelbrektsson of herself and her daughter.

Hanrahan and Engelbrektsson both attend Church of the Nativity in Burke, which has been sponsoring mission work in Haiti under the name Operation Starfish since 1998. Led initially by their late pastor Father Dick Martin and partnering with the international charity Food For the Poor, project volunteers have built over 1,000 houses, helped develop sanitation systems, dug wells and opened schools and greenhouses.

When Operation Starfish's subsidiary organization Fish for Hope visited Nativity last spring and shared photos of midwives from the struggling Caribbean island country, Hanrahan made an instant connection.

"What kind of conditions do these women give birth in?" said Hanrahan. "It's got to be horrible."

She wanted to do something more, focusing on improving the conditions in which women were giving birth. And while she

hadn't seen the conditions first hand, Engelbrektsson has been traveling to Haiti with Operation Starfish for seven years.

"I've seen the dogs and pigs and children all playing in filth and mud," said Engelbrektsson, "and they're not sad. That's the most startling thing to me. They're a joyful people. It makes you just want to do so many things for them."

**AFTER FATHER MARTIN DIED**, the Operation Starfish project leader Jim McDaniel connected Hanrahan with Engelbrektsson, who had already been working with Hanes to have donated underwear and undershirts sent to Haiti. Since she had been successful getting things down there (over 1 million pairs to date), McDaniel thought they could help each other.

The pair reached out to a doctor in Haiti, Dr. Eugene Macklin, to assess the needs of local women going into labor. Those range from the expensive and complex (like Doppler ultrasound equipment to check the position of the baby) to the simple and inexpensive (string for tying off the umbilical cord).

"We've had no luck in getting the large donations," said Hanrahan, "but we thought this is one thing we can do, relatively cheap."

The "kit" to improve cleanliness they were able to come up with includes sterile gloves, string, a scalpel, a bar of soap, alcohol swabs, sterile gauze, a large "chuck pad" to catch the afterbirth and instructions on using everything, translated into Creole. Buying most of it through the same medical supply company, the cost to Hanrahan and Engelbrektsson is just \$2 per bag.

"But it's more than what they have," said McDaniel, a Springfield resident. "And what that \$2 represents really is a reduction in the risk of losing a baby through some problem that you wouldn't have any tool for or way of cleaning."



PHOTO BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION

**(From left) Meg Hanrahan, Jim McDaniel and Melinda Engelbrektsson are working to make a difference in Haiti, one step, one safe birth, at a time.**



PHOTO BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION

**Kits being assembled by Nativity volunteers include a scalpel, latex gloves, alcohol swabs and other essentials for helping facilitate a cleaner birth.**

"And more than that," he continued, "it's the fact that the midwives who are trying their best, feel like there's somebody who wants to help, that they're given something from people who care about what they're doing and what's happening."

**THE TWO WOMEN** raised about \$1,500 in donations from the Knights of Columbus,

the women of Nativity and other groups. On Dec. 20, Hanrahan, Engelbrektsson and over 50 volunteers from Nativity around Northern Virginia will assemble 700 of the birthing kits.

"This is really what we're supposed to be all about, looking for ways to help each other across the street and around the world," said McDaniel. "It's a program that has found the potential in people's hearts to do good and has given them the tools to express that and make it happen."

Then Hanrahan and Engelbrektsson will wait to get reports from their contacts in Haiti on how far their kits go in terms of aiding cleaner births. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) reported the annual maternal mortality ratio in Haiti between 2008 and 2012 to be 630 deaths from every 100,000 live births.

But the women know they have to start small, and they have to start with one step. "Everybody deserves a chance at a safe delivery," said Engelbrektsson. "Every child needs every chance, and if we can make a difference in Haiti, then we have to."



PHOTO COURTESY OF OUR DAILY BREAD

**(From left) Combined Properties' Linda Dreyer presents grocery gift cards to ODB Holiday Program Manager Dawn Sykes, with Holiday Program Coordinator Stella Roberts, Holiday Data Coordinator Dee Osei-Boateng and Executive Director Lisa Whetzel.**



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• 10:00 PM – Service of Holy Eucharist  
**Wednesday, December 24, Christmas Eve**  
• 4:00 PM - Family Service of Holy Eucharist, with Children's Sermon, and  
**Thursday, December 25, Christmas Day**  
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# An Essay To Remember

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

**W**hile many are knee-deep in wrapping paper and egg nog, some students are holed up with computer keyboards and books of quotations. In addition to driving to the mall for holiday shopping, some parents are throwing rapid-fire questions at their children to make sure they are fast on their feet.

For students and parents who hope for slots at the area's top independent schools next year, 'tis admissions season.

"As a school we want to know what the relationship will be between what a student brings to the table and what we will need to bring to the table," said Tim Simpson, assistant head of school and director of admission and financial aid at Bullis School in Potomac, Md.

Interviews are opportunities for admissions teams to get to know applicants and their parents, and share information about their



PHOTO COURTESY OF AUDRA WRISLEY

**Students at Episcopal High School in Alexandria collaborate on a school project. Essays and interviews help admissions teams determine how an applicant would fit into the school community.**

schools.

"We try to encourage students to view the interview as a conversation," said Julie Jameson, director of admissions at St. Andrew's Episcopal School in Potomac. "They should feel comfortable ... be themselves ... and feel free to ask any questions they might have."

In fact, the interview is really a two-way street, says Ann

Richardson Miller, director of admission and financial aid at The Madeira School in McLean. "The girl and her parents should be asking as many questions of me as I am asking of her," she said. "After all, this will be her school for the next four years, and fit is critical, both for us, but also for the girl and her parents."

"Learn as much as you can about the school before your visit and be

prepared to ask questions," said Scott Conklin, director of admissions, Episcopal High School in Alexandria. "This is also an opportunity to brag about your interests, talents and accomplishments. ... Be humble, but make sure you let us know all about you."

That doesn't mean you should ignore your flaws, however. "We look for genuine conversations that convey the student's real interests and passions," said Simpson. "We also want students and parents to be open to talking about strengths and weaknesses."

**THE ADMISSION ESSAY** is another opportunity for students to reveal facets of their personalities that might not be obvious through test scores, transcripts and even letters of recommendation, said Patricia Harden, director of admissions and financial aid at Connelly School of the Holy Child in Potomac. "It should be a well-written snapshot of how an applicant thinks and how she understands some aspect of her world," Harden said.

Some schools even require the admission essay to be completed in person.

"We want to see a student's true, natural writing ability, and we are interested in assessing their ability to develop and present a cohesive, thoughtful essay on the spot," said Michael Cresson, director of admissions, Bishop O'Connell High School in Arlington. "A polished essay prepared at home with lots of edits really doesn't tell us what we want to know to best evaluate an applicant."

No matter where the essay is written however, the same basic writing advice applies.

"We are looking for students to express themselves and give us an insight into what kind of person he or she is," Cresson said. "My suggestions for students ... would be ... to proofread their essay, allow for enough time, do some research on the school and include that in the essay. "These are simple suggestions, but it is disappointing as a director to read through essays and find simple mistakes and see that it was rushed."

## Near Miraculous Production

**"The Miracle Worker" at Paul VI Catholic High School.**

BY TYLER LARKWORTHY  
LANGLEY HIGH SCHOOL

**"H**elen, the chick has to come out of its shell sometime... you come out too!" For Helen Keller, life was a black void of ignorance. Almost sealed off from the outside world, pampered by her parents, she understood only desire and reward. And then one day, she encountered a new woman—a stubborn woman with dark glasses—a woman who, once blind herself, nevertheless had the vision to know exactly what Helen needed: language. Annie Sullivan would change Helen Keller's life forever. Paul VI Catholic High School told her incredible story in "The Miracle Worker."

Written by William Gibson, "The Miracle Worker" premiered on Broadway in 1959 and enjoyed a revival in 2010, receiving critical praise. It was also adapted into a 1962 film. The play follows the early life of

Helen Keller, who has been deaf and blind since infancy, and as a result is completely nonverbal. Helen's parents, the traditional patriarch captain and his softer wife Kate, have spoiled Helen, allowing her to take over the household with her tantrums. After years of chaos, captain and Kate contact the Perkins School for the Blind to find a governess and teacher for Helen. Annie Sullivan arrives by train a few days later. Shocked by Helen's lack of manners, Annie resolves to teach her to obey—and to understand language. Despite incredible struggle, after two weeks alone with Annie, Helen experiences a breakthrough when she comes to recognize that the word "water" she can spell with her hand corresponds to the actual water she touches.

Even with no spoken lines, Isabella Whitfield brought incredible depth to Helen Keller. Immersive and realistic, her frightening tantrums and sudden transformation revealed solid commitment. Opposite her, Abigail Rozmajzl embodied the stubborn

Annie Sullivan. From her first encounter with Helen, Rozmajzl established the monumental difficulty of her task and her inner conflict over her dead brother Jimmie. Whitfield and Rozmajzl cleanly executed numerous difficult fight scenes, further enhancing their engaging performances.

As Captain Keller, Nathaniel Smith boasted an imposing stage presence and stoic expression. His fierce demeanor contrasted perfectly with the more gentle nature of Kate (Madelene Whitfield). Meanwhile, Joey Arzeno created a volatile relationship within the family as James. Arzeno captured the pained obstinacy of his character, adding both valuable comic quips and explosive moments of frustration.

While some scenes could have been more poignant in a darker setting, overall lighting clarified scene transitions and greatly strengthened the show's emotional atmosphere. Make-up, which included life-like mustache and goatee pieces, tooth blacken-



PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

**Rehearsing a scene in "The Miracle Worker" at Paul VI Catholic High School are (clockwise from top) Luke Knodt, Sarah Giuseppe, Isabella Whitfield and Maddy Whitfield.**

ing and diseased eye shadow for the decrepit crones, and subtle age lines for several characters, allowed actors to come to life on stage. An ensemble of costumed servants served as the show's tech crew, creating nuanced characters, including a memorable senile old man (Tommy Kelleher), while moving set pieces safely

and quickly.

"When we do the best that we can, we never know what miracle is wrought in our life, or in the life of another." Paul VI Catholic High School certainly fulfilled Helen Keller's words in their near miraculous production, bringing many in the audience to tears.



# ENTERTAINMENT

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.

## WEDNESDAY/DEC. 31

**War on the Doorstep: Fairfax Militia in the War of 1812.** Exhibition. The Civil War Interpretive Center at Historic Blenheim, 3610 Old Lee Highway. Open Tue.-Sat. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Free tours at 1 p.m. 703-591-0560.

## THROUGH SUNDAY/FEB. 8, 2015

**Dressing for the Occasion: An Exhibition of Costumes and Textiles Representing Fairfax Personalities and Events.** Exhibition. Fairfax Museum & Visitor Center, 10209 Main Street, Fairfax. Open daily 9 a.m.-5 p.m. 703-385-8414.

## THROUGH MONDAY/FEB. 9, 2015

**"Synesthetic Landscapes."** Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. Andy Ilachinski describes his colorful, powerful and magically manipulated images as "Synesthetic Landscapes," referencing the psychological, creative – even mystical – experience of synesthesia, a joining of the senses (smelling sounds, hearing colors, feeling shape) to communicate a point of view to another through his photographs. Showcase artists: Marcia Gordon, "Gems by Meg;" Piper Strong, Metal Works/Judaica; and Joyce Zipperer, metal sculptor/mixed media/metal shoes and jewelry. www.jccnvarts.org.

## WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY/DEC. 17-18

**Moscow Ballet's Great Russian Nutcracker.** 7 p.m. George Mason University Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Moscow Ballet's classic Great Russian Nutcracker returns! http://cfa.gmu.edu/

## WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY/DEC. 17-19

**Christmas Book Sale.** 6-8 p.m. The Franconia Museum, 6121 Franconia Road, Alexandria. A special Christmas book sale to purchase gifts. There will also be used books for sale (hard backs \$1 and paper backs 50 cents and DVDs for \$2). The Franconia Remembers books will also be on sale if you want to complete your collection.

## WEDNESDAY/DEC. 17

**PJ Library Book Buddies.** 10:30 a.m. Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds



**Andy Ilachinski describes his colorful, powerful and magically manipulated images as "Synesthetic Landscapes," referencing the psychological, creative – even mystical – experience of synesthesia, a joining of the senses (smelling sounds, hearing colors, feeling shape) to communicate a point of view to another through his photographs. View his photos through Feb. 9, 2015 at the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax.**

Oak Road, Burke. Please join us as we read selections from the PJ Library and make a craft to take home. Ages 6 months - 5 years. 703-249-1520.

**Things That Go!** 10:30 a.m. Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce Street, Springfield. Join us for stories and activities about planes, cars, boats, trains, etc. Ages 3-5 with adult.

## THURSDAY/DEC. 18

**Preschool Storytime.** 10:30 a.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Build your child's early literacy skills while enjoying stories, songs and activities. Ages 3-5 with adult.

**Tales to Tails.** 4:30 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Need practice reading? Read aloud to a friendly, trained therapy dog. Ages 6-12.

**Friends Of Pohick Library Holiday Book Sale.** 10 a.m. - 9 p.m. Pohick Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Holiday Gift Book Shopping.

## FRIDAY-SATURDAY/DEC. 19-20

**Horse-Drawn Carriage Rides.** Fridays & Saturdays: 2-9 p.m. Mosaic District, 2910 District Avenue, Fairfax. Enjoy horse-drawn carriage rides through the tree-lit streets of Mosaic. www.mosaicdistrict.com.

## SATURDAY-SUNDAY/DEC. 20-21

**Christmas in Vienna.** Saturday: 8 p.m. Sunday: 4 p.m. George Mason University, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Few experiences capture the wonder and the magic of the holiday season quite like the Vienna Boys Choir, who bring their angelic voices to George Mason University's Center for the Arts in Fairfax to perform a spirited Christmas concert of ancient hymns, traditional carols, popular holiday favorites and songs from around the world. Tickets: \$30-\$50. Visit the box office (open Tuesday

through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.) or charge by phone at 888-945-2468 or visit cfa.gmu.edu.

## SATURDAY/DEC. 20

**A Christmas Carol.** 7 p.m. Art Room, Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. Solo performance. NYC actor / playwright, Greg Oliver Bodine performs his one-man performance of Charles Dickens. Children over 10 and adults. General admission \$15 / \$10 Seniors and Students. www.artful.ly/store/events/4306.

## SUNDAY/DEC. 21

**Light Up the Night: Community Menorah Lighting at Mosaic District.** 4:30pm-6:30 p.m. Mosaic District, 2910 District Avenue, Fairfax. Join the community as they celebrate the holiday together by lighting candles, singing songs, enjoying entertainment, eating sufganiyot (donuts) and gelt (chocolates) and spinning the dreidel (top). Contact Laurie.Albert@jccnv.org or visit www.jccnv.org for more information.

**Service of Lessons and Carols.** 10 a.m. Pohick Church, 9301 Richmond Highway, Lorton. This service originated in Victorian England in the 1880s as "Lesson and Carols: A Festal Service for Christmastide," as a series of scripture readings interspersed with Advent and Christmas carols, hymns and choral anthems, tracing God's love from the creation of man and woman in the Garden of Eden, through the annunciation and birth of the Christ Child. For more information call 703-339-6572 or visit http://www.pohick.org.

## MONDAY/DEC. 22

**Pohick Prose Society For Teens.** 7 p.m. Pohick Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Age 13-18 will discuss their favorite books.



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The biggest things are always  
the easiest to do because there  
is no competition.  
-William Van Horne

## SPORTS

## Hayfield's Overstreet Places First on Bars at Yorktown

Hayfield gymnast Molly Overstreet took first place on bars during a four-team meet on Dec. 11 at Yorktown High School.

Overstreet, a junior, earned a score of 8.85. Yorktown's Juliette Mitrovich (8.825) and Olivia Zavrel (8.75) finished second and third, respectively.

Overstreet placed third on beam with a score of 9.05. She posted a score of 8.8 on vault and did not compete on floor.

Washington-Lee's Sophie Hatcher won the all-around with a score of 36.35.

W-L won the team competition with a score of 136.95, followed by Yorktown (134.475), Hayfield (112.475) and South Lakes (109.5).

Last season, Overstreet set a VHSL record on bars with a score of 9.925 at the state meet, earning the then-sophomore a state championship.

As a freshman, Overstreet finished in a three-way tie for first on vault with a score of 9.8 at the 2013 state meet at Centreville High School.

Hayfield will compete in a meet at Fairfax High School at noon on Jan. 10.



PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

**Hayfield junior Molly Overstreet placed first on bars during a Dec. 11 gymnastics meet at Yorktown High School.**

## BULLETIN BOARD

### WEDNESDAY/DEC. 17

**Bilingual Storytime.** 4 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Bilingual storytime in English and Spanish. Build your child's early literacy skills while enjoying stories, songs and activities. Ages 3-5 with adult.  
**Tales to Tails.** 4:30 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Read to a trained therapy dog. Ages 6-12.  
**Genealogy Help Desk.** 7 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Bring your family history stumpers to the experts. Accomplished genealogists and library staff will be on hand to assist you. Adults and teens.  
**Genealogy-Researching Vital Records.** 1 p.m. Kings Park Library, 9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke. Learn how to research birth, marriage, death documents, as well as courthouse records including taxes, deeds, and wills. Find out where these records are and what they tell researchers. Adults.  
**English Conversation For Adults.** 10:15 a.m. Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria. Practise your English skills in a group setting.

### THURSDAY/DEC. 18

**Library Tech Help.** 6 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Get your library-related electronic resources questions answered. Includes help with eBooks and compatible devices. Adults.  
**Spanish Conversation Group.** 2 p.m. Kings Park Library, 9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke. Practice and improve your Spanish with a native speaker. Adults.  
**Springfield Writers' Group.** 7 p.m. Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce Street, Springfield. Share your work, give and receive feedback in a supportive setting. Adults.  
**Walk-In Ebook & Computer Clinic For Adults.** 10 a.m.-12 p.m. Pohik Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Boost your basic computer skills. Our wonderful volunteers will help you to download eBooks. Bring your device, its account ID and password.  
**English Conversation for Adults.** 7 p.m. Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne

Send notes to the Connection at [south@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto: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.

Centre, Alexandria. Practise your English skills in a group setting.

### FRIDAY/DEC. 19

**Using Activities with Meaning to Promote Well-Being and Fun!** 1:30 p.m. Insight Memory Care Center, 2812 Old Lee Highway, Suite 210, Fairfax. Learn strategies for sparking fun and laughter in caring for people with dementia; making your time enjoyable, frustration free and memorable. Call 703-204-4664 to RSVP and for more information.  
**Genealogy Help Desk.** 2 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Bring your family history stumpers to the experts. Accomplished genealogists and library staff will be on hand to assist you.  
**English Conversation Group.** 10 a.m. Kings Park Library, 9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke. Practice your English conversation skills. Adults.

### SATURDAY/DEC. 20

**Teen Advisory Board (TAB) Meeting.** 10:30 a.m. Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Board members meet biweekly to plan and implement projects and programs that will enhance library services for teens. Age 13-18. 703-249-1520.  
**Tales to Tails.** 10:30 a.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Need practice reading? Read aloud to a trained therapy dog. Ages 6-12.  
**Genealogy Help Desk.** 2 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Bring your family history stumpers to the experts. Accomplished genealogists and library staff will be on hand to assist you.

### MONDAY/DEC. 22

**English Conversation Group.** 7 p.m. Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Practice English with others and improve your skills. Adults. 703-249-1520.  
**One-on-One English Practice.** 7, 8 p.m. Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Practice speaking, reading and writing English with a volunteer partner. Ages 8 through adult. 703-249-1520.  
**Library Tech Help.** 11 a.m. City of Fairfax

Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Get your library-related electronic resources questions answered. Includes help with eBooks and compatible devices. Bring your library card, eBook reader, and laptop. Adults and teens.

**Wag A Tale - Read To A Dog.** 10:45 a.m. Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria. Age 5-12 will love to read to our therapy dog. Sign up for waiting list.

**Scratch Programming Demonstration For Ages 9-13.** 2 p.m. Pohik Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Learn the basics of Scratch programming language. Personal computers welcome.

**Friends Of Pohik Library Holiday Book Sale.** 10 a.m. - 9 p.m. Pohik Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Holiday Gift Book Shopping.

### TUESDAY/DEC. 23

**Short Book Conversations.** Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Join our lively book discussion. Call library for title. Adults. 703-249-1520.  
**Library Tech Help.** 2 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Get your library-related electronic resources questions answered. Includes help with eBooks and compatible devices. please bring your library card, eBook reader, and laptop. Adults and teens.  
**Tales to Tails.** 4:30 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Children ages 6-12 read to a trained therapy dog.  
**English Conversation Group.** 7 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Practice speaking English with others and improve your skills. Adults.  
**Friends of the Kings Park Library Meeting.** 7 p.m. Kings Park Library, 9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke. Board meeting.

### WEDNESDAY/DEC. 24

**English Conversation For Adults.** 10:15 a.m. Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria. Practise your English skills in a group setting.



# Spartans Win Early-Season Matchup of Conference 7 Powers

**West Springfield overcomes scoring drought to beat T.C. Williams.**

BY JON ROETMAN  
THE CONNECTION

**W**est Springfield's Alanna Backus reluctantly answered reporters' questions following Friday's game against T.C. Williams, politely requesting media attention instead be directed toward her teammates.

The senior wasn't as passive when the game was on the line.

The West Springfield girls' basketball team went seven-and-a-half minutes without a field goal during the second half and T.C. Williams guard Bhrandi Crenshaw converted a three-point play to give the Titans a 37-36 lead with less than two minutes remaining in the contest. However, shortly after the Titans used a 7-1 run to take the lead, Backus responded with a clutch 3-pointer, putting West Springfield back on top. Backus added a pair of clutch free throws and the Spartans held on to beat the Titans 42-38 on Dec. 12 at T.C. Williams High School.

West Springfield improved to 5-0.

The game was ugly at the offensive end for both teams. West Springfield held a 25-20 advantage at halftime and took a 35-30 lead when Backus scored with 1:10 left in the third quarter. But it took the Spartans more than six minutes to score another point, and more than seven minutes to come up with a field goal.

T.C. Williams failed to pull away, however, and once the Titans took the lead, Backus snatched it right back.

"It was kind of crushing because we had the momentum," T.C. Williams guard Rejoice Spivey said. "We were coming back."

West Springfield head coach Bill Gibson praised Backus for hustling.

"She hit the 3 to get us up and hit a two [free throws] after that," Gibson said. "With the way she played, she was on the floor diving [after the ball]. If we had five players on the court playing that hard, it wouldn't have been as close."

Backus finished with a team-high 14 points.

"Alanna stepped up tonight," West Springfield forward Maura D'Anna said.

West Springfield entered the game averaging 65 points per contest, but was limited to its lowest offensive output of the season.

"We've had problems playing here before," Gibson said. "It's just a hard place for us to play in. ... You play bad and come away with a win, that's a good thing."

D'Anna, a 6-foot junior, finished with 12 points and 10 rebounds, but fouled out during the fourth quarter.

"She played hard, but she's got to be



**West Springfield guard Emily Reba drives toward the basket during the Spartans 42-38 victory over T.C. Williams on Dec. 12.**



**West Springfield point guard Shelby Haynes scored five points against T.C. Williams on Dec. 12.**



**West Springfield forward Maura D'Anna (5) and T.C. Williams forward Grace Peterson battle for a loose ball during their Dec. 12 matchup.**

smarter," Gibson said. "She can't foul out of the game. [She needs to] understand she needs to be a more integral part of our offense."

Shelby Haynes, a 5-foot-10 junior point guard, scored five points, grabbed nine rebounds and came up with a clutch steal in the final 20 seconds for the Spartans.

Spivey led T.C. Williams with 17 points. Senior forward Grace Peterson scored 12 points and grabbed 10 rebounds.

West Springfield and T.C. Williams for years battled for Patriot District supremacy, meeting in six of the final eight Patriot District championship games. The Titans beat the Spartans in four straight district finals from 2006-09. West Springfield won the next three titles, beating T.C. Williams in the 2011 and 2012 finals. The Titans won the final Patriot District championship in 2013, beating a Woodson team that knocked off West Springfield in the semifi-

**"If we had five players on the court playing [as] hard [as Alanna Backus], it wouldn't have been as close."**

**— West Springfield girls' basketball coach Bill Gibson**

nals. The VHSL went to a six-class realignment prior to the 2013-14 season. West Springfield went on to beat T.C. Williams 70-58 in the inaugural Conference 7 championship game in February of last season.

The Spartans are off to a strong start this season, winning their first five games. After graduating standouts Logan Battle (Georgetown), April Robinson (Duquesne) and Amy Berglund (Northwestern-St. Paul) in recent seasons, the Spartans' offensive output is more evenly distributed.

"We're working really good as a team, recently," D'Anna said. "Our connection is really good. We know each other's strengths and weaknesses."

West Springfield faced Herndon on Tuesday, after The Connection's deadline. The Spartans will host Lake Braddock at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 19.

T.C. Williams improved to 3-2 with a victory on Saturday. The Titans will host South County at 5:45 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 19.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

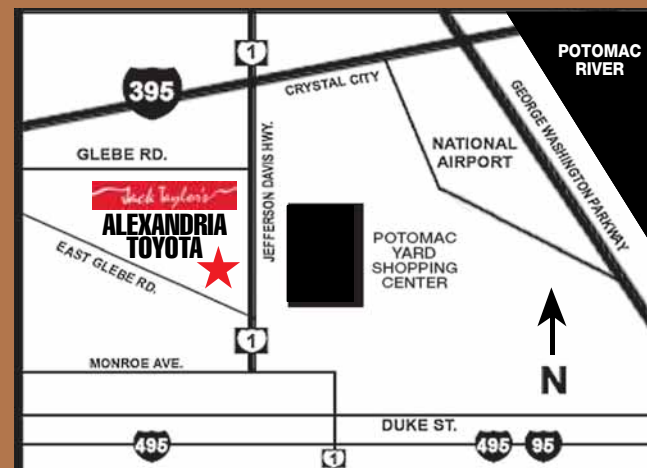


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Daniels Run Elementary fifth- and sixth-graders perform Christmas carols for the crowd.

# Christmas Cookies, Carols and Crafts

Children enjoyed lunch with Santa, Christmas music and holiday crafts, Saturday, Dec. 6, at the Sherwood Center in Fairfax.



Sami Faradi, 5, is happy to be with Santa.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Kendall McCarty, 1, points to Olaf from "Frozen" while elf Madeline Herman watches.



(From left) Friends Reese O'Donnell, 4, and Reilly Lewis, 3, hold hands.

Amanda Li, 5, poses with Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.



(From left) The Cervantes brothers, Miguel, 6, and Marcello, 4, proudly show their Christmas cookies.