

'Santa Trains' Return To the Area

NEWS, PAGE 4

Santa and Mrs. Claus rode the rails and walked through the VRE train to meet, greet and hand out candy canes to those attending "Operation Lifesaver Santa Trains" on Saturday, Dec. 13.

Expert Predicts 'A Slightly Better 2015'

NEWS, PAGE 3

Garza's Vision for County Schools

NEWS, PAGE 8

RIGHTEOUS OR OUTRAGEOUS?



My boss thought our three game ticket plan was outrageous. I thought it is righteous. So what do you think: righteous or outrageous?

By Andy Ruge, Associate Athletic Director, George Mason University

Here's what you get in the three game plan:

- 1. Our very best three games.** The three game plan has our three very best games:
 - Nationally-ranked rival VCU? Yep, February 4, see you here.
 - Homecoming against Richmond? Of course, February 14.
 - Frequent NCAA tournament contestant Davidson? Check, January 24.

These are the games people want to see anyway. With this three game plan, however, you can lock up better seat locations than the single game buyer.

- 2. Free gifts.** Heck, everyone loves free stuff, so we included it. At the Richmond game you get a Mason Basketball koozie. At the VCU game you get a Bobblehead of Mason legend George Evans. At the Davidson game, you get a George Mason bobblehead. For each three game package that you buy you get those three gifts.

- 3. Best seat locations.** When buying single-game tickets to our best game, you're hoping there are good seats left. Bringing the family? For the big games it's tough to get 4 seats together. And don't forget those high service fees. With this three-game pack you know you've got the good seats, to the good games, already in-hand. No questions asked, no worrying, you know you've got 3 chances to see one of the top-5 basketball conferences in the country, right here in Fairfax. You get big-time basketball at small-time prices.

When I look at the three game plan, it is indeed outrageous. And righteous. It costs start at just \$22 per game (\$66 total) and youth (12 & under) are just \$12 per game (\$36 total). You can buy the three-game mini-plan today by calling your Personal Account Representative, Alyssa, at 703-993-3491 or visit GoMason.com/hoops today.



95 Express Lanes Offer Free Ride Until Dec. 29

On Monday morning, Dec. 15, commuters took advantage of the free ride on the 95 Express Lanes which stretch from inside the beltway just north of Edsall Road, to Garrisonville Road (Rt. 610) in Stafford County. The lanes opened Sunday, Dec. 14 and are toll-free until Dec. 29 when the tolls will be in place for vehicles with one or two occupants but vehicles with three or more can ride for free. Everyone needs an E-ZPass or E-ZPass Flex.

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- 1/14/2015 HomeLifeStyle
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day is Jan. 19
- 1/21/2015 A+ Camps & Schools
- 1/28/2015 Neighborhood Outlook
- 1/28/2015 Winter Fun, Food, Arts & Entertainment; Valentine's Preview

FEBRUARY

- 2/4/2015 Valentine's Dining & Gifts I
- 2/4/2015 Wellbeing – National Children's Dental Health Month
- 2/11/2015 HomeLifeStyle
- 2/11/2015 Valentine's Dining & Gifts II
- Valentine's Day is Feb. 14 • Presidents Day is Feb. 16
- 2/18/2015 A+ Camps & Schools
- 2/25/2015 Pet Connection Pullout

MARCH

- 3/4/2015 Wellbeing
- 3/11/2015 HomeLifeStyle Real Estate Pullout
- 3/18/2015 A+ Camps & Schools
- 3/25/2015 Spring Fun, Food, Arts & Entertainment
- FCPS Spring Break 3/30-4/3

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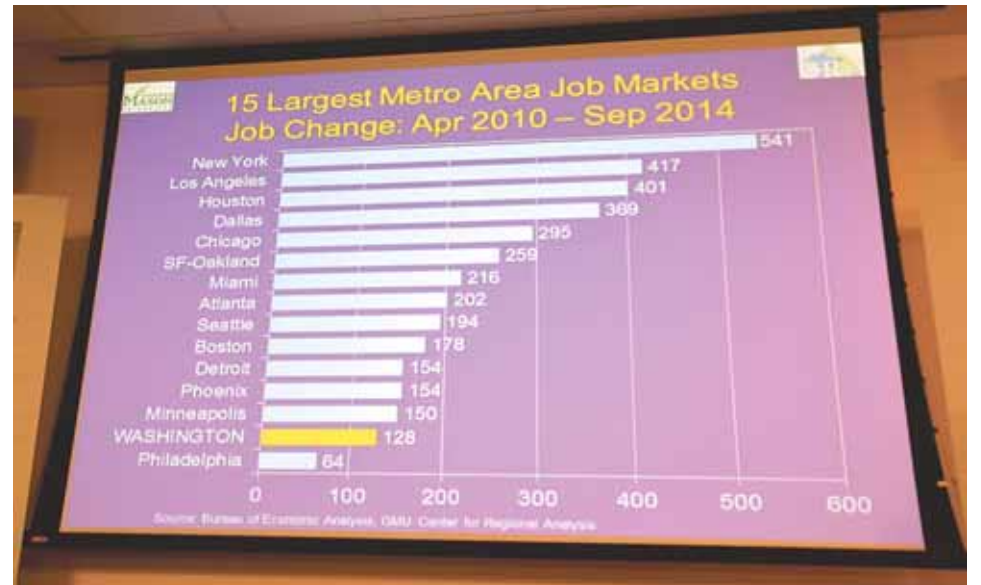
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- Vienna/Oakton Connection



PHOTOS BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION

Stephen Fuller went out into the crowd of attendees during his NVAR-hosted presentation on the past year's economy and the economic outlook ahead.



The news could be better – according to Fuller and many of the charts and graphs he referred to during his presentation, the Washington Metro area, including Northern Virginia, is lagging well behind in many key recovery factors. Fuller discussed several reasons for the situation, not the least of which being the aftermath of 2013's "fiscal cliff" and the continuing impact of sequestration.

Expert Predicts 'A Slightly Better 2015'

Realtors association hosts year-end economic update.

BY ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

Most keynote speakers are used to a bit of fidgeting from the audience about 20 minutes into their spiel. Just goes to show the level of interest both the topic and the speaker generated when after almost two hours, the hosts of the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors (NVAR) Year-End Economic Review with Dr. Stephen Fuller basically called the session "a wrap" to convince the attendees that the included lunch awaited them.

Fuller brings an impressive collection of credentials to the role; Ph.D., Dwight Schar faculty chair and university professor and director, Center for Regional Analysis, School of Public Policy at George Mason University, not to mention chief economist for Cardinal Bank. Adding an arsenal of graphs and other analytical data to his expertise and experience, Fuller provided insights about the closing year, a preview of what to expect in 2015, and some long-term economic expectations for Northern Virginia, the District and Maryland.

"2014 was actually softer in all categories than expected, given the strength of the economic recovery exhibited in 2013," said Fuller, "particularly in relationship to the housing market. Fuller credited a number of factors for the reason that things slowed down in 2014. Lower wage jobs, slower immigration and reduced international transfers, lower marriage rates, limited access to credit, degraded mobility (when the jobs being created aren't worth moving for),

student loan burdens and even changing generational values and preferences were the reasons he cited.

"Perhaps most surprising is that for the first time in the memory of many, our local economy is underperforming compared to the rest of the country." Based heavily on direct and ancillary federal government employment, the area has previously been less negatively impacted by the recession than other areas of the country. "This is new territory for us," Fuller said. "Even more surprising, it didn't really make the headlines that our economy shrank more in the last year than it did during the recession." He likened the situation to a luxury liner with a small leak. "It may be hardly noticeable now, but someone had better start baling and repairing soon."

ACCORDING TO FULLER and many of the sources he consulted, the "Fiscal cliff" and the introduction of sequestration in 2013 are just beginning to make an impact on the local way of life – and not in a positive way. All of the reports on the creation and status of jobs show that most growth, particularly in this area, is taking place in industries that on average pay less and that many of those who lost their positions in government or government contracting, have yet to be "redeployed" in similar situations. "Health and education and local government were the key growth industries in the this area, and we can't sustain our economy on only these two sectors. We definitely need wage growth, something we haven't had in this recovery so far," added



Stephen Fuller from George Mason University held the stage for almost two hours at the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors (NVAR) Year-End Economic Review. Fuller spoke to the issues that shaped 2014, as well as predictions for the coming year, and beyond.

Fuller. "During the recession, employers learned the lessons of productivity." With higher unemployment and older workers opting out of the workforce, employers could more easily pick and choose and keep pay rates lower. The unemployment numbers are dropping, but according to Fuller, we still haven't reached the stage where employers must offer more to secure the best. And there is something else missing from the equation in Fuller's educated opinion. "Where is inflation? There isn't any. And you need it to give merchants the opportunity to provide wage growth."

Despite a number of troubling indicators that he believes require immediate and significant attention, Fuller does predict a slightly better 2015. "We are still feeling that

pent up demand that will push things a bit higher." Fuller does not see a repeat of the flurry of increasing house prices that many sellers enjoyed not long ago. Instead, he believes that many luxury homes will come down in price and average time from list-to-sale may increase somewhat.

WHEN ASKED during the Q&A session to comment specifically on Fairfax County, Fuller cautioned that without creation of higher-wage jobs, the county would face a "real squeeze to services – fire, policing, education." Local government needs tax money to do its job. Lower income and property taxes coupled with an increasingly aging population could mean even more challenging times ahead. "But interesting ones," he declared. "Downsizing or rightsizing according to your view, things

change."

This NVAR event was sponsored by RGS Title Company and hosted by the NVAR Small Broker and Real Estate Finance and Settlement Forums. NVAR has several economic outlook programs in store for the coming year. Visit their website at www.nvar.com to keep up to date on NVAR happenings.

Fuller will speak at the 23rd Annual Cardinal Bank and George Mason University Economic Conference on Jan. 15, 2015. Pre-registration for the conference is available at www.cardinalbank.com. More on Fuller's update, review and the analytical data he presented are available on the George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis website at cra.gmu.edu.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

On Saturday, Dec. 13, Virginia Railway Express (VRE), held its 18th annual "Operation Lifesaver Santa Trains."

'Operation Lifesaver Santa Trains' Return to the Area

On Saturday, Dec. 13, Virginia Railway Express (VRE), Virginia's commuter rail service, held its 18th annual "Operation Lifesaver Santa Trains." Santa, Mrs. Claus, and Santa's helpers rode the rails and walked through the train to meet, greet and hand out candy canes. Helper elves passed out Operation Lifesaver railroad safety information coloring books and carolers from Riverbend, Chancellor, West Potomac, Thomas Edison, Stonewall Jackson, and Osbourn Park High School choirs made sure everyone was entertained. VRE operated 13 sold-out Santa Trains while entertaining nearly 9,000 attendees from the Manassas, Burke Centre, Fredericksburg and

Woodbridge VRE stations during this annual holiday event.

"You can't believe how much happiness VRE Santa Trains deliver until you experience it yourself" said Doug Allen, VRE's chief executive officer. "Whether you are a staff member working the trains, a parent, or a caroler, there is no greater satisfaction than seeing the excitement of children's faces when they meet Santa. It's rare when we get the opportunity to educate people about railroad safety while spreading holiday spirit but that's what Santa Trains are all about," said Mr. Allen.

VRE is the tenth largest commuter rail service in the U.S. and is a transportation partnership of the Northern Virginia and



Children meet Santa during the "Operation Lifesaver Santa Trains" on Saturday, Dec. 13.

Potomac & Rappahannock Transportation Commissions. VRE's mission is to provide safe, cost effective, accessible, reliable, convenient, and comfortable commuter-ori-

ented rail passenger service. It serves Northern Virginia and Washington D.C. and its offices are based in Alexandria, Va. Visit: www.vre.org for more information.

Simple Luxuries Not Everyone Can Afford

Helping organizations need help year round.

BY ABIGAIL CONSTANTINO
THE CONNECTION

After the hustle and bustle of the holidays, taxpayers begin scrambling to get that end-of-the-year charitable donation so they claim it on their tax returns. For people who want to benefit while helping people, two Oakton based organizations, Northern Virginia Family Service and The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia offer two ways to give.

The Northern Virginia Family Service's, NVFS, Gifting for Families program may be over but financial contributions to its other programs and services are always welcome, said Tonya McCreary, director of agency communications at NVFS. This year's toy closet saw an increase of 350 children from

last year, giving a total of 2,100 children in 1,000 families.

It is especially during the holidays, inundated by commercialism and consumerism, that low-income families may feel the pinch of poverty even more. But it is also during this time that generosity and community giving can restore hope.

NVFS's Family Reunification Program, which serves recent immigrants with special needs or traumatic histories, helped Ruth (name changed for confidentiality) and her children have the chance to experience what others take for granted, buying something they want.

BUYING SOMETHING that is desired but not needed is a "luxury...rarely experienced" by families served by NVFS, said McCreary. Ruth sought asylum in 2012, after surviv-

ing torture in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Her six children, ages 10-18-years old, joined her and they struggle with bills and basic necessities, as Ruth has not been able to find full-time employment. At last year's Gifting for Families, Ruth and her family all got something they wanted, not just something they needed. Her children got toys, cosmetics, crafts and gift cards, so they can buy something they wanted from a store. Ruth was brought to tears by the generosity of the people in the community, reported McCreary.

At the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia, a public charity focused on grant giving, donors can have more say in how their contributions are distributed. The organization serves Fairfax, Loudoun, Arlington and Prince William counties and the cities of Alexandria, Falls Church, Fairfax, Manassas and Manassas Park.

For people who do not have a specific charity in mind, the Community Founda-

tion for Northern Virginia can help with the research. "If you're interested in something in particular but not a specific organization" Community Foundation for Northern Virginia can help direct contributions to that cause, said Lesley MacDonald, director of community investment.

DONORS have three ways to donate: establish a donor advised fund—a kind of charitable savings account—donate to an existing donor advised fund, or donate to Community Foundation, which also runs several funds. It also keeps a list of researched and scrutinized organizations so donors know about the organization receiving their money.

NVFS and the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia offer different ways to give in ways both donors and people in need can benefit. For more information on how to give, visit <http://www.nvfs.org/> and <http://www.cfnova.org/>.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

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.

SATURDAY/DEC. 27

Teen Writers Group. 10:30 a.m. Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Share, discuss and get feedback of works in progress. Teen volunteer facilitates. Age 13-18. 703-249-1520.

Genealogy Help Desk. 2 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Bring your family history stumbers to the experts. Accomplished genealogists and library staff will be on hand to assist you.

SUNDAY/DEC. 28

Red Cross Blood Drive. 12-4 p.m. Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road. To sign up to donate blood, www.redcrossblood.org and search by sponsor code FAIRFAXRAILROADMUSEUM or call 1-800-redcross. For eligibility questions, 1-866-236-3276.

MONDAY/DEC. 29

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.

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OPINION

Merry Christmas

A message of
peace and joy.

Merry Christmas. It's a magical time of year, and perhaps Connection Newspapers has over indulged in displaying the many rituals of Christmas on our pages in the past few weeks. In events around the area, a sense of community has infused holiday parades, Christmas tree lightings, menorah lightings, choral performances, singing of carols and other traditional events with warmth and joy.

We have covered performances of "The Nutcracker" and "A Christmas Carol;" covered acts of compassion and giving in almost every corner of our communities; photographed Santa in so many places arriving in so many ways — by boat at Lake Anne in Reston, by firetruck in Vienna and McLean and other places, by motorcycle around Fairfax County; religious celebrations of many kinds; gift indulgences of many kinds.

But Christmas is about the birth of Jesus Christ. Whether you believe the Christmas story literally or in spirit, you know it is the story of joy, hope and love, the promise of redemption. So here, let us share the verse from the Bible, Luke 2: 4-19:

"So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the

house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

"And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.' Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.'

"When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.' So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the

manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart."

Happy Hanukkah

Happy Hanukkah, which lasts for eight days and this year began Tuesday evening. While Hanukkah is not one of the most important Jewish religious observances, it is a celebration that gets added attention from timing. Hanukkah celebrates the miracle of a one day supply of oil for the temple lasting eight days.

Editor's Note about the Rest of 2014

This is our last regular edition of 2014. Next week, after Christmas, we will publish the children's edition, devoted entirely to the artwork and writing of local students. Our next regular editions will publish Jan. 7-8, 2015, with deadline for content and advertising of Jan. 2. In the meantime you can reach the editors at editors@connectionnewspapers.com and sales/marketing at sales@connectionnewspaper.com.

— MARY KIMM

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Do Fairfax County Police Act with Impunity?

Fifteen months, after the shooting of John Geer, no officer has been identified, no charges have been filed, no grand jury has been convened.

BY JEFF STEWART

Iwould like to begin by saying that I have always and still do support the police as a whole. I appreciate the job that they do and the risks they take on a daily basis in an effort to keep the public safe. The ongoing policy in Fairfax County of police self-investigation, when officers are involved in possible crimes, has to change.

I am willing to bet that all of you have heard of Michael Brown and Ferguson Missouri? How many of you have heard of John Geer? Probably not near as many. I would like to share a story about another life taken by police. It happened right here in Fairfax County over 15 months ago.

On Aug. 29, 2013 I witnessed the homicide of my best friend of over 25 years by a still unidentified Fairfax County police officer. Late that morning John had found out that his partner of 24 years and mother of his two children was moving out. John became distraught and began to throw some of her property in the front yard. One of John's daughters called their mom and she immediately came home from



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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)

work. After a heated discussion the police were called. John kissed his daughters and sent them to a neighbor's house. Nobody was in the home with John when police arrived. I arrived shortly after the police to find several officers on the scene. Two officers were holding John at gunpoint as he stood in the doorway of his home talking calmly with his empty hands resting on top of the storm door. John, feeling he had committed no crime, refused the officers' orders to come outside. The police were told that John owned firearms and reportedly he had expressed a willingness to use those firearms if the police tried to enter his home without a warrant. After around 40 minutes of what appeared to be calm conversation, John began to lower his hands almost deliberately slow, with his clearly empty palms pressed against the screen. I thought for a second that this confrontation was ending and John was coming out of the home. When John's empty hands were about even with his face, he was shot once in the chest from less than 20 feet. John had made no quick or aggressive moves of any kind and appeared to be no threat to police, to others or to himself. John quickly hunched over, grabbed his wound and retreated into the house. He

SEE OVERSIGHT, PAGE 7

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OPINION

Taking Exception on Express Lanes

To the Editor:

An article was recently published in your newspaper discussing the new I-95 express lanes (95 Express Lanes Open, The Connection, Dec. 18-24, 2014). One statement in the article read, "Construction manager for the project John Morse, 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." Creating the express lanes, however, does not resolve a

primary underlying issue. Along vast stretches of heavily congested I-95, including in Prince William County, there are only three lanes for traffic. The express lanes are just a partial solution. I-95 is the busiest highway on the East Coast. Tens of thousands of out-of-town travelers use this highway daily. These travelers likely will not know to have an EZ-Pass Flex to access these lanes, much less pay a potentially high dollar figure to use them. Local travelers also have

to incur a substantial daily fee unless they manage to have three passengers. Plus, the toll lanes end after the I-495 interchange, leaving those without three passengers subject to driving in the main line of I-395. Northern Virginia is continuing to grow. The express lanes did not add any additional lanes to I-95, allowing for traffic to continue to jam the highway.

Abigail Ross
Woodbridge

Independent Oversight Needed

FROM PAGE 6

pushed the door shut as he retreated and immediately collapsed on the floor less than 5 feet from the door.

This tragedy only gets worse. John lay just inside the door reportedly yelling for help. Despite his pleas for help, the officers on scene stood outside and did nothing while waiting for SWAT to arrive. The SWAT team entered an hour later to find that John had bled to death. It should be noted that the patrol officers on the scene had an entry shield and could have entered the house to rescue John with minimal risk yet chose to do nothing.

After 15 months, no officer has been identified, no charges have been filed, no grand jury has been convened and no reason has been given to the family or the public. In fact the Fairfax County Police Department, up until a recent legal action filed by the Federal Justice Department, had refused to provide requested information to anyone including the Virginia State Attorney. The attorneys for the Geer family have filed 127 requests for documents and in response, 122 objections have been filed by the county. Despite the incredible lack of cooperation from the Police Department, local county officials, the State Attorney General and the Governor have remained silent. It took over one year for Fairfax County supervisors to write a gently worded letter requesting that the case be resolved.

The case was turned over to federal prosecutors last January. The FBI conducted interviews in March. Still, no information has been released to the public

and no resolution has been achieved. It has taken recent involvement from U.S. Sen. Grassley of the Senate Judicial Committee and legal action by Federal prosecutors to get the Fairfax County Police Department to only recently provide the requested information, information that should have been made public a year ago. It would appear that this police department does not feel compelled to answer to any Virginia or federal official. This has to change. The family, friends and the public have yet to be told anything about John's death.

When possible crimes have been committed by police officers such as police shootings, nobody investigates the case but the police. There are no independent oversight procedures of any kind. Fairfax County supervisors endorse this policy and along with the Police Department, have rejected every attempt to create any kind of independent oversight procedures. It should be noted that the Fairfax County supervisors hire the police chief. They also control the money dedicated to the department. This policy of self-investigation, no oversight and the inevitable obstruction that occurs as a result will continue until the public demands better from its elected officials.

To date, no officer in the 75-year history of the Fairfax County Police Department has ever been charged in a wrongful shooting. These include the deaths of John Geer and at least two other unarmed citizens since 2006, all shot by police under questionable circumstances.

Jeff Stewart, a Chantilly resident, witnessed the shooting of his friend John Geer on Aug. 29, 2013.

FAITH NOTES

Christmas Eve Services at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. 4:30 p.m. on Dec. 24 – children's service with Christmas pageant; 6 p.m. – family service with Christmas pageant; 8 p.m. – a wonderful, contemplative service with the Adult Chorale singing. For more information, go to: www.uucf.org or call the office: 703-281-4230.

Bluegrass Christmas Eve service on Wednesday, Dec. 24, at 5 p.m. in Franconia Hall at Fire Station #5, 6300 Beulah Street, Alexandria. The community is once again invited to find meaning in the mayhem of the season. The familiar Christmas story will be celebrated in a new way with traditional carols by the acclaimed Big Hillbilly Bluegrass band. Join your friends and neighbors at the

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

firehouse this Christmas Eve. The service is sponsored by Aldersgate Kingstowne, a United Methodist Church that invites people to follow Jesus through the shared practices of worship, learning in groups, and hands-on service to the poor. For more information, go to www.aldersgate.net or call 703-660-2600.

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

The Guhyasamaja Buddhist Center, 10875 Main St., Fairfax City provides free classes to both newcomers

and advanced practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism. The center emphasizes working with the mind and learning how to understand the workings of the mind, overcoming inner causes of suffering, while cultivating causes of happiness. Under the direction of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, the center is a place of study, contemplation and meditation. Visit <http://www.guhyasamaja.org> for more information.

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



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PROFILE

How Does She Do It?

By TIM PETERSON
& EDEN BROWN
THE CONNECTION

Karen Garza is a good listener. And once she's listened, she is, admittedly, not very patient.

"If there's a real issue, I don't think it has to be debated for 10 or 15 years," Garza said in an interview. "Either we're going to do something about it or not."

In May and June 2014, less than 12 months after taking the helm as superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, Garza and her staff hosted eight community meetings on the topic of later start times for high schools. According to FCPS, 1,000 people participated in person, another 2,000 weighed in online.

By October, the School Board voted in favor of changing the start times, something it had been considering for years but never pushed forward. For the 2015-2016 school year, all county high schools will start classes between 8 a.m. and 8:10 a.m.

Another entrenched issue: moving from half-day Mondays at elementary schools to full-days. The half-day weekly teacher work period dated back to the 1970s.

"Once we identified we really have an issue here, we don't have enough time built into our elementary schedules, I met with the team and I said, 'Can we get this done?'" said Garza. "These are the reasons why we need to change it, our timeline is aggressive, but can we get it done? And they said, 'Yes we can.'"

The School Board broke with 40 years of half-day Mondays with a vote in June 2014. The change went into effect at the beginning of September.

"She looked at these with a new eye and was very eager to move on them," said Ryan McElveen, an at-large School Board member who was part of the group that hired Garza, "so we could get on with dealing with other issues."

McElveen said Garza's face-time at additional "listening tours," meetings she's been hosting around the county since she came to Fairfax from Lubbock, Texas in July 2013, have helped re-establish critical community ties.

"Under the previous superintendent," McElveen said, "there were perceptions the board and the central office had precipi-

View from Texas

In Houston

"When I hired Karen in 2005," former Superintendent of Houston Independent School District (HISD) Dr. Abelardo Saavedra said, "the position of chief academic officer had been open several months. I went looking for her. I'd never met her but I'd heard about her. There is a big difference between a mid-sized district and a larger one; the dynamics are completely different. I was taking a risk because she came from a mid-sized one of about 40,000 in Corpus Christi, and ours was much bigger. She adjusted very quickly."

As Chief Academic Officer, Garza was responsible for the educational programming and the academic performance of 200,000 students and the administration of 300 schools. Saavedra said one of their most lasting accomplishments at HISD was the Per-



PHOTO BY ALEX McVEIGH

New Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent Karen Garza speaks to parents and teachers at Sunrise Valley Elementary School Monday, Oct. 28, 2013.

tously been removed from the viewpoint and perspective of the community. That was key in our hiring of Karen. We were looking for someone who could bring the community back into the fold."

FORMER FCPS Superintendent Daniel Domenech still lives in Fairfax County, and his perspective differs somewhat from McElveen. "It didn't seem to me there was a distance with [Garza's predecessor] Jack Dale," he said. "I always felt that Fairfax as a school system was very responsive to the community, very much in tune with what's going on."

The two men agree that community involvement is crucial to moving the school system forward. In a county of 180,000 students that's growing by 17 a day (according to Garza), that's a lot of parents with a lot of voices to listen to.

Debbie Kilpatrick, vice president of membership with Virginia PTA, is impressed so far with Garza being "inclusive" and having "contagious high energy."

formance Pay initiative. "I had decided we'd do this, but honestly, I had no idea how to do it. Ordinarily I'd put it under HR but they weren't moving fast enough. Karen quickly took ownership. Of course I didn't have to ask Karen to take ownership," he said laughing. "This thing wasn't moving and she stepped up to the plate. It was tied to academics, so she figured she could do it as well as the HR folks could, and she did. That program continues today and is why Houston did so well."

Saavedra was referring to the district's educational improvement and performance management model, called ASPIRE (Accelerating Student Progress. Increasing Results and Expectations). The ASPIRE program paid over 18,000 teachers and instructional staff more than \$70 million in performance bonuses over three years based on the academic improvement of children.



PHOTO BY RENEE RUGGLES

Dr. Karen Garza, incoming FCPS Superintendent and Dr. Daniel Domenech, former FCPS Superintendent, both in robes at Bryant Alternative School graduation, June 13, 2013, where Domenech was the graduation speaker.

"She has a schedule not many people could keep up with and she really doesn't say no to anyone who wants her time," said Kilpatrick. "On the contrary, she says, 'No, I want to listen.'"

Tina Hone, a School Board member from 2007 to 2011 and founder of the advocacy group Coalition of the Silence, disagreed with Garza over her first budget proposal for the county.

"We had a little crossing of swords," said Hone. "What I really respect about Karen: I publicly made a statement, then she called me. I looked at the phone, pulled it away from my head and looked at it again. I was blown away by that."

Hone sees Garza in stark contrast to previous FCPS leadership that exhibited "very much an effort to control rather than respond." She cited the controversial closing of Clifton Elementary School in June 2011, when she said the board did little to consult

with the public first.

"There was this sense there were members of the School Board who said they don't want to meet with people who disagreed with them," she said.

"It takes courage to be a problem-solver,"

After Garza's first year, the average reading scores of HISD students on the SAT test increased five points while the Texas and national averages fell.

Saavedra noted that one of the most unusual things about Garza was her relationship with the Houston Chief Financial Officer Melinda Garrett. "Usually in those jobs," Saavedra said, "there are silos formed between the financial folks and the academic folks. Not between Garza and Garrett. They became good friends and worked together to make positive changes happen."

Garrett confirmed Garza's achievements: "People in Texas miss her but realize Texas' loss is Virginia's gain. They were all happy she got this major superintendent's job. It is something she really wanted and deserved. She will be great for Fairfax. She is not afraid to make decisions. She always has her hand on the pulse of the people she is working with."



Superintendent Karen Garza shares a moment with Debbie Kilpatrick, president of Fairfax County Council of PTAs at the Listening Tour on Dec. 6.

PHOTO BY EDEN BROWN/
THE CONNECTION



PHOTO BY BONNIE HONES

Senior Robyn Smith explains Active Minds while Lindsay Laiks, Rachel Chalkley, Karen Garza and Kim Dockery listen at a March 2014 assembly at Woodson High School. More than 1,100 people gathered for comfort and advice in the aftermath of two student deaths.

Hone continued, "to try to turn the ship against the tide, with courage and grace to get this stuff done."

That courage, grace and increased input from the community are helping Garza get traction on the issues she prioritizes with the School Board, still in its honeymoon phase with Garza.

"We are all happy with her, the board members," said at-large member Ilryong Moon. "I can say that with confidence. We made a right decision bringing her to Fairfax. She's been helping the members to look at issues in a certain perspective that we otherwise wouldn't have an opportunity to take advantage of."

Garrett noted that she and Garza shared the same background as school teachers; that love of working with children is something they both brought to their work in funding schools and making sound decisions for school districts.

In Lubbock

As Lubbock's Independent School District's superintendent, a job Garza held for four years before coming to Fairfax, her accomplishments include implementing a standardized curriculum for the 29,000-student district, focus on student achievement, and financial stability. She left LISD with the largest fund balance they had ever had and worked through some hard times with state funding, getting gains for teachers, students, and taxpayers. Garza helped lead the effort to win voter approval of a \$198 million bond in 2010, the largest bond in the district's history. As

BUT GARZA is not a one-woman show, and she attributes her accomplishments in part to the cabinet and administrative structure she realigned within her first year. Unlike most new superintendents, Garza brought zero staff with her from the Lone Star State. Instead, she spent her first fall and winter assessing the team she inherited, before reorganizing in the spring.

Garza nixed the old eight-cluster administration group in favor of five regions and split the department of Professional Learning and Accountability roles among other departments. This eliminated five staff positions and saved \$637,000, according to John Torre, public information officer for the

Lubbock superintendent, Garza narrowed the achievement gap, increased the graduation rate and helped reduce the number of students who drop out.

Linda DeLeon, a Fairfax County resident who had served as a school board member in Lubbock, was delighted to see Garza come to Fairfax.

She was asked by someone to attend one of Garza's early public hearings in Fairfax. When her name was announced to the group, Garza lifted her head and gave DeLeon a big smile: "Well, here is Linda, someone I knew from Lubbock." DeLeon had been a school board member for 18 years in Lubbock under five different superintendents (but not during Garza's tenure) and had kept track of the things Garza did while there.

She was impressed: "Karen Garza was up to the challenge. What made her positive was she was willing to sit with groups of people and have discus-

Bio

KAREN GARZA

Current Position: Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent

Salary: \$265,000

Age: 51

Hometown: Canyon, Texas

Spouse: Louis Garza

Children: Four, grown

Education: Ph.D., University of Texas-Austin, May 2002; M.Ed., University of Houston-Victoria, May 1994; B.S., University of Houston-Victoria, 1986.



schools.

"It's my view that to better align a large system, you have to narrow the number of people at the highest levels making the decisions," Garza said. "I can create stronger, better alignment with five people than I can with eight people."

One of Garza's hires was Marty Smith as chief of staff, to whom she delegated the lead role on full-day Mondays. Smith was previously the superintendent of Cluster 1.

"He understands and knows the system," said Garza. "He knows the players, the right people to bring to the table to get it done. And he's a good listener, which I appreciate."

"The biggest thing with Dr Garza is trust," said Smith. "She places a lot in the individuals who work for her. While I carried out her vision, she was able to really build consensus with the board in terms of an individual approach. She did much of the same with teacher and principal associations."

Even with a streamlined and realigned support team, "Obviously Dr. Garza is the CEO for them to execute the vision," said Moon. To be a passionate captain of the ship, Garza is motivated by her lifelong love of schools and learning. She started her career as an elementary school teacher, aspiring to be like her father, a college English professor.

"I love being in classrooms, and I'm amazed at how gifted our students are," said Garza. "I'm very mindful of the fact that we have such an opportunity for a positive impact on students' lives. I try to never lose sight of the fact not only are you setting students up for success at that next level, but in many cases making a memory. Make it a positive one."

Hone said the teacher in Garza is apparent and one key to her current success. "Everything she does, it's how a teacher approaches things," Hone said. "It's clear, explained, pulling people in instead of telling them what to do. That dictatorship thing doesn't work. There's always someone run-

sions. Decisions were made that were very tough, but she never wavered from being able to sit down with a group even if they were against the decisions she was looking to move forward with."

DeLeon said Garza made positive changes in Lubbock. One was to consolidate schools. "Closing the schools was the hardest issue for her. So many parents came to these hearings, and complained that closing schools was not right, that the school was the nucleus of the neighborhood. But Garza worked with them until you could see a transformation from those parents. It's true that now the kids have to go a little further, but what they did make it possible for 2-3 teachers to teach a 3rd grade class. They coordinated, they worked together, and they did a much better job serving the needs of the kids. You could also actually see the gap close between minority and 'anglo' kids."

Schools Need Community's Help

Superintendent Karen Garza begins and ends her Listening Tour meetings with a plea to those in the room — parents, teachers, employees, unions — to help her achieve what needs to be done for their school system.

"I am going to need your help," she says to audiences who voice concerns about class size, resources for special education, and teacher salaries.

Garza says she hopes to have a lot more people engaged during the budget process this spring. "Come and testify. Talk with your Board of Supervisors at those meetings. It's usually filled with folks. But we need a lot more parents and advocates for our public schools to be in that room."

Garza explains: "We grow by 17-20 students every single day. We have grown by 20,000 students in six years. This is a huge strain on our budget. We spend \$25 million a year to support new students. We aren't happy with teacher salaries. We need to help people in our area understand our budget. Help us as we enter this next budget year."

"Read our 'Citizens Guide'," says Garza. "There's lots of good information in there to help people understand how the system works and how they can help. This year it includes a section on why your year-end balance ends up

being what it is. The more we can get people to read that document, the more people will follow how the system works and make solid inputs."

"We need to get more business and community leaders to understand: Poverty is growing, our county is definitely changing. We started some outreach this year with our superintendent round-tables."

The president of the Fairfax County Council of PTAs, Debbie Kilpatrick, underlined the need for more community involvement: "Karen Garza cannot do this on her own. Parents need to get more involved so they know what they can do to support Garza and their schools. They should look at the websites, come to PTA meetings, know what the issues are and vote on them. Can she get smaller classrooms achieved? If she says it, she will do it. But she will need help."

Steven Greenburg, president of Fairfax County Federation of Teachers, echoed Garza's plea. "Do we know as a group of people, as average citizens living in Fairfax County, how to take action? If this community sees value in education then voters have to make their views known. Karen Garza won't get what she wants without more involvement by the community," Greenburg said. "People will have to reach out to public officials and let them know where the voters stand."

ning a rebellion."

Garza will be tested when she and the board tackle the \$63.9 million deficit she projected for FY2016 — and it gets worse in FY2017.

"She is such a good diplomat and everyone likes her," said Fairfax County Federation of Teachers President Steven Greenburg. "But there is an expectation on the part of some stakeholders that she will generate revenue and hold county or state officials accountable for the decisions they take. The only thing that would limit what she wants to accomplish is lack of funds."

If she can manage the funds, Garza has a Texas-sized list of goals for the county.

The Road to Fairfax County

A timeline of Superintendent Karen Garza's career in education.

1 1986-1991: Elementary School Teacher, Yoakum, Texas (1,539 students, 38% white and 50% Latino and spends about \$8,000 per pupil).

2 July 1991-1994: Education Specialist, Region III Education Service Center, Victoria, Texas. Victoria ISD has 13,680 students and spends about \$7,500 per pupil annually.

3 July 1994-July 1996: Principal, East Side Elementary School grades 5-6, Palacios Independent School District (ISD), Palacios, Texas (1,508 students, \$10,269 per student, 68% economically disadvantaged).

4 July 1996-July 1997: Curriculum Supervisor K-12, El Campo ISD, El Campo, Texas (3,465 students, \$9,735 per student, 67% economically disadvantaged).

5 July 1997-July 1999: Associate Executive Director for Governmental Relations, Texas Association of School Administrators.

6 July 1999-October 2002: Executive Director for Curriculum, Staff Development, and Accountability, Katy ISD, Katy, Texas (58,444 students, \$7,740 per student, 29% disadvantaged).

7 October 2002-August 2004: Associate Executive Director for Governmental Relations, Texas Association of School Administrators.

8 August 2004-June 2005: Deputy Superintendent, Corpus Christi ISD, Corpus Christi, Texas (38,041 students, spends \$8,240, 68% disadvantaged).

9 June 2005-July 2009: Chief Academic Officer, Houston ISD, Houston, Texas. (200,944 students, \$9,231 per student, 80% disadvantaged).

10 July 2009-June 2013: Superintendent of Schools, Lubbock ISD, Lubbock, Texas (28,476 students, \$8,163 per student, 62% disadvantaged).

11 July 2013-present: Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent, Fairfax County Public Schools (186,785 students, \$16,880 per student, 26.4% free/reduced price meal eligible).

Sources: Fairfax County Public Schools, Washington Area Boards of Education, Texas Tribune

HOLIDAY HOME

Reconfiguration Makes for Holiday Family Fun

Transitional-style interior solution improves 30-year-old floor plan.

BY JOHN BYRD

The most dynamic possibilities for an interior design solution may only be revealed in unexpected ways and over time. Denise Kidd, for instance, who has occupied a 30-year-old center hall colonial in Fairfax Station with husband Scott for more than 20 years, was certain the couple had “made the house their own” when they remodeled the kitchen 14 years ago.

The makeover had everything Denise wanted: a u-shaped counter with easy access to stove, refrigerator and clean-up; pleasant maple cabinets; and a pantry in an adjacent family room.

Moreover, the plan discretely partitioned the kitchen from the family room; the cook’s work space from the breakfast nook.

The cook’s work triangle — according to the accepted space-planning wisdom of the day — needed to be protected. Yes, some parts of the floor plan were a bit boxy — but isn’t setting perimeters what good design is supposed to do?

Flash forward a few years, and what a difference a stunning realization can make.

Now empty-nesters, the Kidds had been gradually looking at ways to deepen their satisfaction with their home — which is situated in a lovely leafy setting, and frequently the site of extended family entertaining.

The large screen porch off the family room, for instance, was designed to segue into well-landscaped acreage complete with decking, hot tub and sports court. The window wall in the breakfast room, likewise, exists principally to emphasize natural surroundings.

All these matters considered: why then



Scott and Denise Kidd of Fairfax Station are starting off the New Year with a kitchen-centric entertainment suite.

shouldn’t Denise’s kitchen also be an “open” affair, a place where the cook can interact with guests while still enjoying a beautiful day?

Yet, interestingly, the revolution in Kidd’s thinking about her kitchen has humble origins, beginning when she decided that she simply wanted a wider, deeper refrigerator.

Seeing plainly that a larger model would not fit the tall, narrow cavity holding the current unit, she contacted a remodeling firm they had previously hired to upgrade their bathrooms in search of advice.

In short order, designer Liz Lee of Sun Design Remodeling proffered a plan that would accommodate a deeper refrigerator, yet also pointed to larger horizons that might feasibly be pursued.

“Liz pointed out that we could increase the height to several rooms in the back of the house a full 12 inches by eliminating the dropped ceiling,” Kidd said.

“I was intrigued at once, and when she worked up perspective drawings, I realized

that the plan would open up sight lines and dramatically alter the dynamics of the entire space. It seemed right for Scott and I in this new phase of our life.”

Lee said, “Raising a ceiling usually makes a space seem much larger. Especially when you have the kind of indoor/outdoor connectivity this house was designed to profile.”

WORK WITH ROOMS that suddenly seemed expansive, even generous, Lee’s plan reconfigured the 90-square-foot galley kitchen to better flow with the breakfast nook and family room.

To gain floor space for new appliances, the designer relocated the doorway between the kitchen and dining room to the middle of the wall, installing a pair of frosted glass pocket doors for both privacy and added natural light.

Deleting the cumbersome pantry that had served as a space divider between the kitchen and the family room, Lee next

Details

Sun Design Remodeling frequently sponsors tours of recently remodeled homes as well as workshops on home remodeling topics. Headquartered in Burke, the firm recently opened a second office in McLean. Call 703-425-5588 or visit www.SunDesignInc.com.

opened up the space by wrapping an interior wall with custom-designed floor-to-ceiling cabinetry.

Situated between a pair of archways linking the house from front to back, the piece features two glass-faced, back-lit cabinets. As the new home for Denise Kidd’s stemware and fine china, the built-in displaces a bulky, space-consuming hutch in the breakfast nook. Better yet, its 8-foot-by-2-foot’ bianco romano granite surface more than triples the kitchen’s horizontal serving capacity.

“It’s a great serving station for the entire first floor including the screened porch,” Kidd said. “It’s created logical, uncluttered circulation patterns we simply didn’t have before.”

Meanwhile, a substantially larger refrigerator, wine cooler and microwave now occupy formerly restricted kitchen floor space which opens invitingly into the family room.

Roughly paralleling the new cabinet console, a multi-level surface that curves into the breakfast nook replaces the existing L-shaped counter. Equipped with a pair of stainless steel clean-up sinks and a dining counter with two stools, the new design functions as a casual mid-room gathering spot — steps from the breakfast table, an easy stride from the mudroom, new pantry and laundry room.

“People were always gathering at the counter anyway,” Kidd said. “Liz’s plan simply makes it a lot easier for friends to drop in for a chat while I keep an eye on the meal.”

Better yet, the new interior allows Denise to take in the backyard views while standing at the sink.

Balancing the panoramic sight lines, Lee’s thoughtful finishwork gives the space its panache and brighter, lighter ambiance. A stone and glass tile backsplash unifies kitchen walls with the elegant new china cabinet. Crown molding and other detailing marry the bold new built-in to the home’s fundamentally formal interior design elements.

“The execution is pretty consistent with what has come to be known as transitional design style,” Lee said. “Formal elements carefully integrated into an open plan allow for easier interaction within a cohesive aesthetic presentation.”

For Kidd, that also means it’s easier to tend to the kitchen while also entertaining...and the timing couldn’t be better.

“We’re having 15 for Christmas, and I’m ready,” Denise said. “It’s a good feeling.”

John Byrd (byrdmatx@comcast.net) has been writing about home improvement topics for 30 years.



The two stainless sinks have eased clean-up, owner Denise Kidd says. She also now has an unobstructed view of the backyard.



An L-shaped kitchen counter has been replaced with a multi-level surface that curves into the more open family living area.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MITRO HOOD

SPORTS

Parent Coaches Searching for Balance

Coaching one's own child can be stressful, rewarding.

BY JON ROETMAN
THE CONNECTION

Keith A. Kaufman, Ph.D., a sport psychologist with offices in Washington, D.C. and Old Town Alexandria, said two potential issues stand out for a young athlete coached by a parent.

"I think two issues that jump out to me are the athlete feels like they can never escape talking about the sport," Kaufman said in a phone interview, "or they feel too much scrutiny or not enough; like they feel like they're treated differently [than other members of the team]."

Kaufman said "it's absolutely essential there are boundaries," when a parent is coaching his or her child, and it's important the child is treated in the same manner as his or her teammates. While each case is different, he said the relationship can be beneficial.

"I would say most coaches are harder on their own kids than they are on the regular kids," Madison assistant volleyball coach Christine Zanellato said. "We tend to point out when they mess up more than you would with another kid."

Zanellato and head coach Carrie Hall each have a daughter on the Madison volleyball team, which was one point away from capturing the VHSL 6A state championship in the fall. Zanellato coached her daughter, Natale, when she was young, but stopped when Natale was in middle school.

Their relationship had some rough spots. "When I was in [sixth] grade, I hated it," Natale said. "I would cry most nights. I would cry on the way home [from volleyball]. I was very sensitive. I would get a little upset when she would tell me to suck it up or do this and that. I wasn't as good with her criticism."

After a few years playing for other coaches, Natale started to appreciate her mom's volleyball knowledge. Zanellato played collegiately at LSU and coached the Fairfax High varsity from 2007-2011. When it came time for high school, Natale, who attended Lake Braddock as a freshman, wanted her mom as a coach. Zanellato joined the Bruins' staff as an assistant in 2012.

"I think what has worked out well for us is that we have a really solid relationship and she trusts that when I am working to improve her skills, I'm looking at her as an athlete," Zanellato said. "My criticism is all based on what she needs to do on the court. It's not about her personally. I think that's the hardest thing [about being a parent/coach] is kids sometimes personalize the comments."

Natale would later transfer to Madison.



PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

Natale Zanellato, left, helped the Madison volleyball team finish state runner-up in the fall. Her mother, Christine Zanellato, is an assistant coach for the Warhawks.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Hayfield's Molly Overstreet, middle, is a two-time VHSL state champion gymnast. Her mother, Kristin Overstreet, right, is an assistant coach with the Hawks. Also pictured is Hayfield head coach Michelle Pennow.

After not playing high school volleyball her sophomore year, Natale joined the Warhawk varsity as a junior and was a key contributor at outside hitter for the 2014 state runners-up.

"I love working with my mom," Natale said. "I respect her. I know that she played great. She's a great coach. When I was younger, it was a little rougher. I was just like, 'I don't want to listen to you,' that kind of stuff. I respect her judgment and I respect what she's saying. I really respect her opinion. I love having her on the coaching staff."

Hall said she treats her daughter, Kendal, a standout junior setter for the Warhawks, no differently than any other member of the team.



PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

Madison head volleyball coach Carrie Hall's daughter, Kendal Hall, is a setter for the Warhawks.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Langley offensive lineman Tyler Howerton, left, is seen as a freshman in 2013. His father, John Howerton, right, is the Langley head football coach and is a member of the Shepherd University athletic Hall of Fame. Tyler's grandfather, Cig Howerton, is a member of the Randolph-Macon Hall of Fame.

"It's not hard to me at all," Hall said. "I've been here 14 years and to me it's about the program. ... It's the program first, then my daughter."

Hall said the two talk about volleyball at home, but don't discuss strategy.

"We talk about if we think we had a good game or not that night, but nothing too elaborate," Hall said. "... That way she's part of the team, I'm part of the coaching staff. She doesn't need to know anything that's going on."

Kendal said she's appreciative of her mom's volleyball knowledge.

"It's definitely nice," Kendal said, "coming home and having someone to talk to who definitely knows what they're doing."

Langley football coach John Howerton

started his sons on a path toward gridiron success at a young age. Jack, now a sophomore at Stetson University in DeLand, Fla., and Tyler, now a sophomore at Langley, started strength and skill training before the age of 10. However, they did not play organized football until high school.

Howerton, who was inducted into the Shepherd University athletic Hall of Fame after garnering All-American status as an offensive tackle, taught his sons the basic fundamentals of offensive line play, such as getting in a proper stance. He also showed them the basics of strength training, including 15-minute workouts with a lightweight aluminum pipe.

SEE PARENT COACHES, PAGE 15

ENTERTAINMENT



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.

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.

THROUGH 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.

Bull Run Festival of Lights & Holiday Village. 5:30-9:30 p.m. Bull Run Regional Park, Centreville.

The Portal Wreath signifying the official start of the beautiful Bull Run Festival of Lights, this display has been part of the show since 2006. Each year a new ornament representing a display in the show will be added to this collection, and the portal wreath is the first in the series. Santa's Enchanted Lights, with over 40,000 animated lights set to music! This great feature is merely a fraction of what you'll find at this season's Festival of Lights. Admission: \$20 per car.

THROUGH TUESDAY/JAN. 6

Christmas at Mount Vernon. 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. George Washington's Mount Vernon, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Mount Vernon. Themed decorations (including 12 Christmas trees) and historical chocolate-making demonstrations

will be offered. Tour the rarely-open third floor of the Mansion and learn how the Washingtons celebrated Christmas. In 1787, George Washington paid 18 shillings to bring a camel to Mount Vernon for the enjoyment of his guests. During Christmas at Mount Vernon, visitors can meet a camel on the grounds.

THROUGH SATURDAY/JAN. 31

Exhibit of Colorful Nutcrackers. 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. Closed on Tuesdays. Sully Historic Site, 3650 Historic Sully Way, Chantilly. See an amazing array of nutcrackers, both old and new, in a colorful case exhibit. Did you ever wonder where the craze for collecting nutcracker dolls came from? Nutcrackers have a fascinating history. The first nutcrackers were produced to crack nuts more effectively and the oldest known metal example, on



PHOTO COURTESY OF QUINTANGO

Quintango, chamber tango quintet, performs at the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia in Fairfax Jan. 10.

exhibit in Tarent, Italy, is from the third or fourth century B.C. The Leavenworth Nutcracker Museum in Leavenworth, Washington, shows a bronze Roman nutcracker dated between 200 B.C and 200 A.D. German nutcrackers, made as decorative pieces, were developed around 1500. Early nutcrackers were in the shapes of animals, birds and people. Later, they were made in the likeness of kings, soldiers, church leaders and ruling class figures. Fine wood carved nutcrackers were created across Europe, especially in France and England by the 15th and 16th centuries. Admission: \$7/adult, \$6/student, \$5/senior or child.

THROUGH SUNDAY/FEB. 8
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

“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.

MONDAY/DEC. 22

Holiday Happenings. 10:30 a.m. Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Come celebrate the holidays and join us for stories, songs, activities, and crafts. Ages 3-5 with adult. 703-249-1520.
Preschool Story Time - Rainbow Readers. 10:30 a.m. Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria. 3 to 5 year olds with a caregiver enjoy early literacy storytime enhanced with songs.
Pohick Prose Society For Teens. 7 p.m. Pohick Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Age 13-18 will discuss their favorite books.

TUESDAY/DEC. 23

Stories from Strawberry Park. 10 a.m. Mosaic District, 2910 District Avenue, Fairfax. Enjoy a live interactive performance each week taught by a group of unique storytellers. For ages 10 and under. Held outside in Strawberry Park. In inclement weather story time will be held in Angelika Film Center.

THURSDAY/DEC. 25

Third Annual Christmas Day of “Giving Back.” 1-5 p.m. Kilroys, Ravensworth Shopping Center 5236 Port Royal Road, Springfield. The event this year has expanded to include packing Care Packages for our deployed Service Members, accepting Thank You Letters and Cards for our Veterans in Veterans Homes and Hospitals and accepting, clean gently used or new Winter Coats for our local Homeless Veterans. <http://www.americasadoptasoldier.org/>
SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 13

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 12

"The Frisco Kid." 3 p.m. Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. The day includes entertainment, food and fun for all ages. Magician Jay Mattioli performs (he was a finalist on TV's America's Got Talent), arts and crafts, games and activities, face painting, moon bounce, and a community service project. Kosher food available for purchase. At 3 p.m., the JCCNV will screen "The Frisco Kid"—a hilarious 1979 comedy/western starring Gene Wilder and Harrison Ford. J Fest fee per family (up to 6 people): \$20/\$15 JCCNV member. Film only: free. Call 703-323-0880 for details and to register, or visit www.jccnv.org.

SATURDAY/DEC. 27

"A Christmas Carol." 1 p.m. Workhouse Arts Center, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. LIVE onstage! When Scrooge, the owner of a hotel, decides that his employees can't have the day off to enjoy Christmas with their families, Santa (in disguise), decides it is time for a change. Santa sends The Spirit of Christmas to visit Scrooge and show him his past, present and future. Will Scrooge's heart change? You will have to come and enjoy this wonderful original adaptation by the well-known Producer/Director/Playwright, Vianlix Mestey, to discover the answer. Let's make this Christmas one that Scrooge will never forget! Running time 75 minutes with one intermission, appropriate for all ages. Tickets: \$9-\$13. workhouse.org.

Kaydee Puppets. 2 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Kaydee Puppets present "A Visit to Santa's Workshop" cosponsored by Friends of the city of Fairfax Regional Library. All ages.

MONDAY/DEC. 29

Brain Games at the Library. 3 p.m. City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Have fun and win prizes with our board games and card games that challenge your thinking and build your skills. Ages 8-12.

Animal Signs and Hibernations. Learn how to look for signs of local animals that can be seen during the winter and about animals that hibernate. Presented by Hidden Pond Nature Center. Ages 6-12.

Petr McCorry's One-Man Band. 2:30 p.m. Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce Street, Springfield. Enjoy songs from around the world with Peter McCorry and his one-man band. All ages. Please sign up each child and adult separately.

TUESDAY/DEC. 30

Pokemon Club. 7 p.m. Kings Park Library, 9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke. Bring your Pokemon trading cards to trade or play the Pokemon game. Ages 6-12.

Reptile World For Ages 6-12. 2:30 p.m. Pohick Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Meet an interesting selection of live, large, colorful, and gentle reptiles from all over the world. Event for children only.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 31

Small Wonders. 10:30 a.m. Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Build your child's early literacy skills with stories, songs, and play. Ages 1-2 with adult. 703-249-1520.

Cool Cow Presents: Jeff Maurer NYE Special Engagement. 7 & 9 p.m. Workhouse Arts Center, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. Cool Cow Comedy's headliners and featured performers take the stage in the W-3 Theatre once again! Host and Comedian Rahmein Mostafavi (who has performed stand-up at such venues as DC Improv, Richmond Funny Bone and Caroline's on Broadway) leads regular sold out shows, making Cool Cow a staple of the entertainment options in Lorton! This month, headliner Jeff Maurer appears on the Workhouse stage. Your ticket will include performance, light snack fare and complimentary admission to the New Year's Eve Concert and Dance in the McGuireWoods Gallery featuring The 6th Generation. A la carte beer, wine, soft drinks are sold before performance. Due to ABC regulations, guests are not permitted to bring outside alcoholic beverages to performances. Due to mature subject matter, patrons under the age of 18 must be accompanied by parent or legal guardian. Tickets: \$35-\$40. <http://www.workhousearts.org/>

New Year's Eve Masquerade Ball. 8 p.m. Empire, 6355 Rolling Road, Springfield. Live performances by Ego Likeness and Bella Morte. Doors at 8 p.m. 18+. <http://www.empire-nova.com/event/728885-new-years-eve-masquerade-springfield/>

Fairfax Four Miler. 6 p.m. Pacers Fairfax, 10427 North St., Fairfax. A four-mile road race in Old Town Fairfax followed by food and entertainment. Proceeds support the Fairfax Police Youth Club. 703-537-0630. www.runpacers.com. \$40.

TUESDAY/JAN. 6

Stories from Strawberry Park. 10 a.m. Mosaic District, 2910 District Avenue, Fairfax. Enjoy a live interactive performance each week taught by a group of unique storytellers. For ages 10 and under. Held outside in Strawberry Park. In inclement weather story time will be held in Angelika Film Center.



PHOTO COURTESY OF QUINTANGO

QuinTango, chamber tango quintet, performs at the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia in Fairfax Jan. 10.

Magical Music and Dance

QuinTango comes to JCC in Fairfax on Jan. 10.

BY DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

Tango. The word conjures earthy dance and sizzling music. "Tango dance best exhibits this: two people create a dance so seamlessly, so beautifully it takes your breath away," said Joan Singer, founder of Northern Virginia's QuinTango. "Tango endures because it is real... it's intense, it's intimate, it's courageous."

Soon you will be able to see the allure and emotions of the tango for yourself as the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia (JCCNV) is bringing QuinTango to local audiences. It is to be a lively evening of music, spirited dancing by two Argentine dancers, and stories behind how immigrants brought the tango to the

public's attention first in Argentina; then the world.

The QuinTango musical troupe includes two violins, cello, bass and piano playing the rich, sultry sounds of the classic tango orchestra's repertoire.

QuinTango has performed at the White House and Lincoln Center. The group has worked with the Washington Performing Arts Society's educational programs and is part of the Virginia Commission for the Arts Touring Performing Arts program. The group has also received a WAMMIE music award from the Washington Area Music Association.

The troupe wants to create a dialogue with the audience. "We promise to give you our all - and in return we rely on your feedback, your sighs, your applause, your rapt attention," said Singer. "Together we can create a few hours of musical intimacy which will sustain us both long after the concert is over."

"We are creating something new every performance. Part of creativity is vulnerability - and in seeing it, in allowing it, the audience becomes part of the intimacy," added Singer. "We want people to under-

Where and When

QuinTango at the JCC of Northern Virginia, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. Performance: Saturday, Jan. 10 at 8 p.m. Tickets: \$29 non-members JCCNV, \$24 JCCNV members and seniors. \$19 for those under 30. For tickets information call 703-537-3000 or visit: www.jccnv.org

stand what tango is - and to fall in love with it."

For some tango cultural references; Al Pacino won the 1992 Oscar dancing the tango in "Scent of a Woman." There was also Broadway's 1976 Tony Award winning "Chicago" with its musical number "Cell Block Tango" later performed by Catherine Zeta-Jones in the Academy Award winning 2002 movie "Chicago."

"I think the audience will come away with an appreciation of the history of Tango." This includes "the ways Eastern European immigrants and the tango benefited each other," said Dan Kirsch, JCCNV cultural affairs director.

"Tango is exciting, it's engaging, it's often on the edge," noted Singer. Don't resist it.

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SPORTS

Parent Coaches Searching for Balance

FROM PAGE 11

Jack earned all-state honors during his time at Langley. He could bench press 500 pounds and squat 675. He is now an offensive lineman at Stetson. Tyler recently completed his sophomore season as a starter on the Langley varsity. Both played right guard for the Saxons.

Howerton said he has tried to treat Jack and Tyler in an equal fashion to other players on the team, but admits he has higher expectations for his sons.

"I try to treat them as any kid out there," Howerton said. "As a parent, you probably have more expectations for your own sons. I try not to yell at them any more or less than anyone else. I do expect them to excel as much as possible because they've been exposed to me as a coach more than the other kids have."

Howerton was coached by his father, Elton "Cig" Howerton, in youth football. Cig Howerton was an All-American at Randolph-Macon and was inducted into the university's athletic Hall of Fame.

Hayfield assistant gymnastics coach Kristin Overstreet started coaching her daughter, Molly, at a young age, as well, but it didn't take long for Molly to surpass her mother's teachings.

"I also coached Molly when she was Level 3 at Cardinal Gymnastics," Overstreet said. "She quickly surpassed my coaching abilities and moved up through the Level system in club gymnastics and became a Level 9."

Molly gave up club gymnastics prior to her sophomore year, but still competes at the high school level for Hayfield. Now a junior, Molly has already captured a pair of state championships, finishing in a three-

way tie for first on vault as a freshman, and setting a state record on bars as a sophomore.

At the high school level, Molly rarely needs coaching help, allowing Overstreet to focus her attention on the team's less-experienced gymnasts.

"Molly is so knowledgeable that she can coach herself,"

Overstreet wrote in an email. "She knows the corrections she needs to make. I just remind her to have fun and do her best. She is also a great coach to the younger/newer girls. She demonstrates skills and gives them cues for making skills easier for them."

"I love working with the Hayfield girls. We have nine girls who have never competed in gymnastics before and they improve daily. They usually need my time at practice more than

Molly does, but I am always watching her out of the corner of my eye. I rarely have to set limits on her. She knows what is expected and she does it."

Molly struggles with back pain "from years of overuse, training up to 25 hours a week and the constant pounding and hard landing," her mother wrote. The pain is to the point that Molly might have to walk away from gymnastics this year, according to Overstreet.

Molly said one of the greatest benefits of having her mom as a coach is when it comes to dealing with pain.

"Some benefits for having my mom as a coach are that she knows me the best, so when I'm in pain or anything like that, she can tell," Molly wrote. "My mom is a very understanding person and her being my mom and coach, it makes it that much easier to communicate with her about what's going on, or if I don't want to do something."

"I think two issues that jump out to me are: the athlete feels like they can never escape talking about the sport, or they feel too much scrutiny or not enough; like they feel like they're treated differently [than other members of the team]."

— Sport psychologist **Keith Kaufman, Ph.D.**

BULLETIN BOARD

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

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.

An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them.

-Werner Heisenberg

21 Announcements

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21 Announcements

21 Announcements

Ocean Pines



Dr. Donald Anthony Flegler, age 85, passed into eternal rest at Atlantic General Hospital on Sunday, December 14, 2014. Born November 21, 1929, in Cleveland, Ohio, he was the son of the late Anthony A. and Mary Nemecek Flegler. He is survived by his beloved wife of 59 years Mary K. Flegler and children, Kathleen Mary Tracy and her husband Patrick of Pittsburgh, PA, Dwayne Edward Flegler and his wife Marti of Reston, VA and Stephen Anthony Flegler and his wife Melanie of Herndon, VA. There are nine grandchildren, Patrick Tracy, Christopher Tracy, Timothy Tracy, Cassie Jackson, Kirstie Flegler, Kalla Flegler, Katherine Flegler, Andrew Flegler, Jordan Flegler, and four great-grandchildren, Madison Flegler, Lilliane Flegler, Andrew Flegler, Jr., and Evelyn Flegler.

His family moved to Washington, DC in 1940 when his father was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. During that tenure, Don attended Capital Page School where he served two years as a Page in the US House. He attended University of VA and was a 1955 graduate of the Georgetown University School of Dentistry. He then served as a dentist in the US Army for two years as a Captain while stationed at Fort Meade, MD. Following his discharge, he moved his family to Virginia and opened a dental practice. After 30 years he retired to Ocean Pines in 1988. There he served as an active member of the Environmental Control Committee for approximately 20 years.

Donald was an affectionate husband and caring father who adored his grandchildren and great grandchildren. In his spare time he enjoyed boating, wood working, model building and watching the Washington Redskins. Above all, he will be remembered for his love of family, optimistic outlook and tenacious drive to never give up.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held on Friday, December 19, 2014 at 11:00 AM at St. John Neumann Catholic Church. Friends may call on Wednesday, December 17, from 3:00 until 6:00 PM at the Burbage Funeral Home in Berlin. Prayers will be said beginning 4:00 PM by Rev. William Porter. A donation in his memory may be made to: St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital 262 Danny Thomas Place, Memphis TN, 38105. Letters of condolence may be sent via: www.burbagefuneralhome.com

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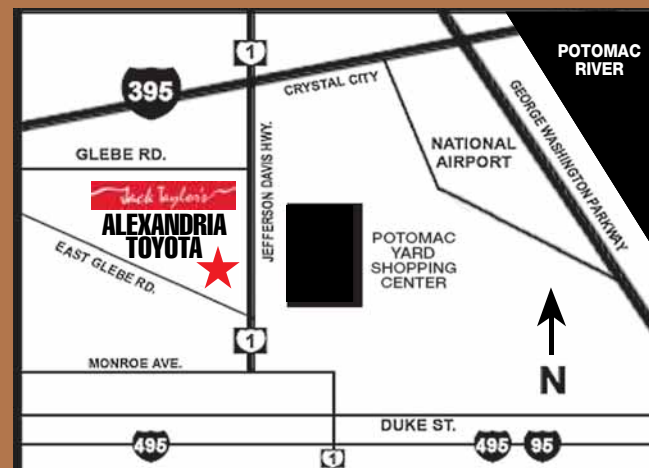
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