

Angela Boyer and her dog Marz. "He's an active, energetic teenager," Boyer said, "and he has a lot of energy to let out when he gets the chance to run outside and play."

Great Falls CONNECTION

Inside
PET CONNECTION

Stalled Labor Market Slows County Budget

NEWS, PAGE 3

Celebrating Valentine's at St. Francis Creche

NEWS, PAGE 6

Best Friends Of Great Falls

PET CONNECTION, PAGE 10

OPINION, PAGE 8 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 14 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 18 ♦ SPORTS, PAGE 16

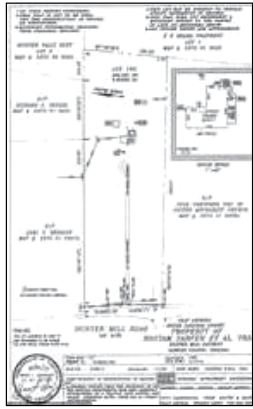
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Stalled Labor Market Slows County Budget

Proposed budget calls for no real estate tax rate increase, but average homeowner would pay \$184 more.

BY KEN MOORE
THE CONNECTION

Supervisor Jeff McKay pointed out the irony in County Executive Ed Long's proposed \$3.8 billion budget. Three planning positions would be eliminated from the budget even though Long suggested the county needs more efforts to raise revenue from commercial and industrial venues.

"A timely planning process in revitalization is important in economic development," said McKay after Long's 30-minute presentation to the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, Feb. 17. "The planner piece is not going in the same direction as the economic development question."

McKay pointed to redevelopment along the Route 1 corridor as a source of economic growth that would require extra input from planning. Long agreed that the county urgently needs to expand the nonresidential tax base in the county.

Commercial assessments dropped 0.6 percent, while residential assessments increased 3.4 percent. Commercial vacancy rates are higher than they have been since 1991. Although the U.S. economy grew at an estimated rate of 2.6 percent during the fourth quarter of 2014, "we are clearly underperforming the national economy," Long told the Supervisors, mostly due to the sequester and reductions in federal spending and contracting.

"Our economy is very dependent on people buying cars, buying houses and shopping," Long said.

Long forecasts no significant improvements in the short term future. "We cannot fund all our priorities and investments." Most departments, aside from public safety, will see some expenditure reduction.

Just 5,100 jobs were created in Northern Virginia in 2014, less than half of the 11,900 jobs created in 2013, which is half the number of jobs (25,250) created on average in 2011 and 2012.

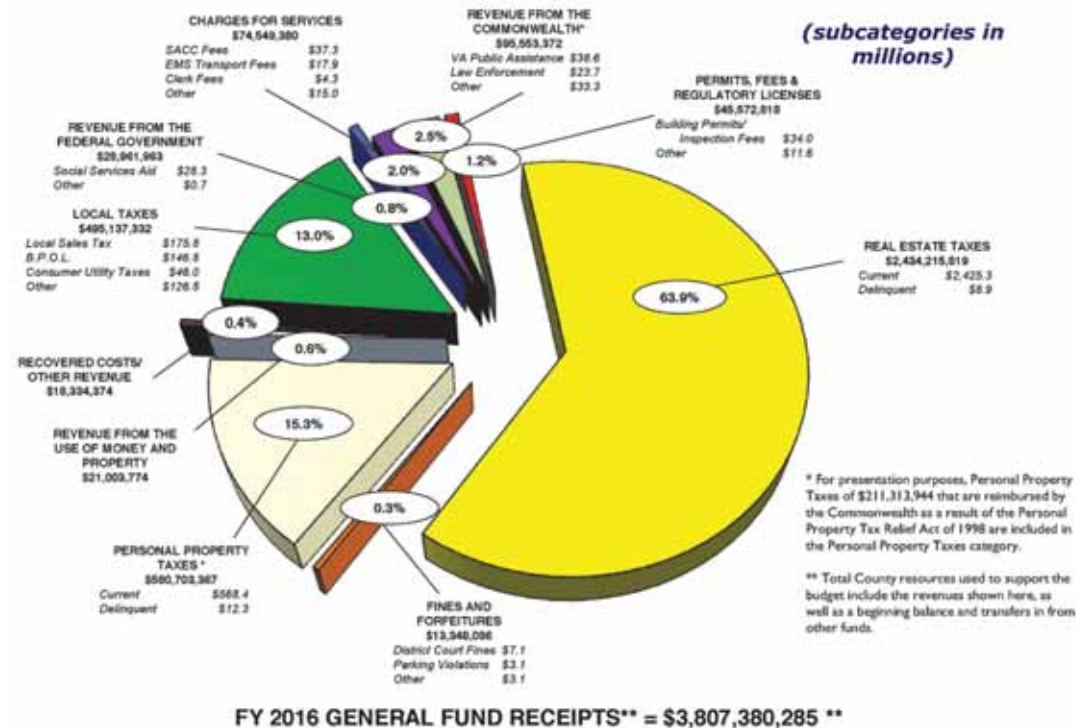
"It is a bit sobering," said Hunter Mill Supervisor Catherine Hudgins.

Budget Schedule

March 3: Board advertises FY 2016 tax rate
April 7-9: Public hearings
April 21: Budget markup
April 28: Budget adoption

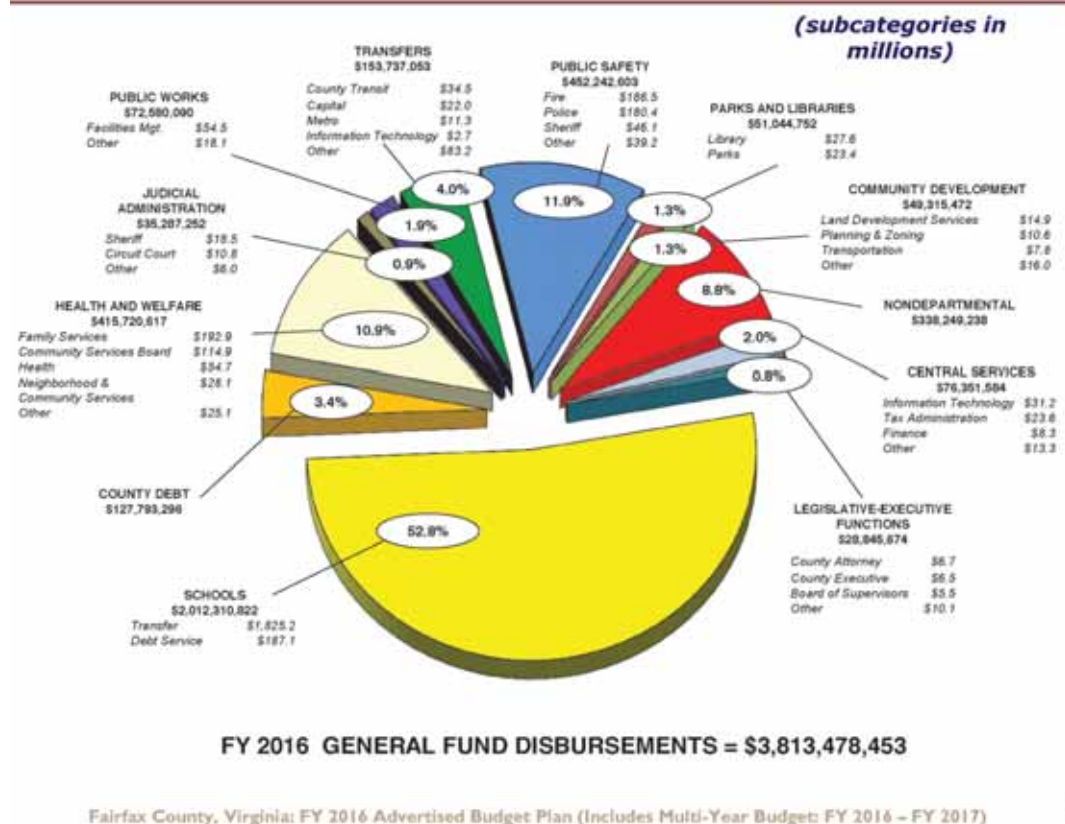
To sign up to speak at one of the public hearings, call the Clerk to the Board's Office at 703-324-3151 or 703-324-2391 (TTY 711) or to access the form to sign up to speak, go to https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosclerk/speaker_bos.htm The public can send written testimony or communicate with the Clerk's Office by email at: clerktothebos@fairfaxcounty.gov

FY 2016 Advertised Budget Plan: "Where it Comes From"



This pie chart shows sources of county revenue, with 64 percent coming from real estate taxes.

FY 2016 Advertised Budget Plan: "Where it Goes"



This pie chart shows county expenditures, with 52.8 percent going to Fairfax County Public Schools, and 12 percent to public safety.

Budget Town Hall Meetings

Hunter Mill District Budget Meeting
Frying Pan Park, 2709 West Ox Road,
Herndon
Saturday, Feb. 28, 9 a.m.

Dranesville District Budget Meeting 1
Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown
Pike, Great Falls
Wednesday, March 4, 7 p.m.

Dranesville District Budget Meeting 2
McLean Community Center, 1234
Ingleside Avenue, McLean
Wednesday, March 11, 7:30 p.m.

Providence District Budget Meeting
Providence Community Center, 3001
Vaden Drive, Fairfax - Multi-
Purpose Room 2
Wednesday, March 11, 7 p.m.

Chairman Bulova's Community
Dialogue on the Budget
Fairfax County Government Center,
12000 Government Center
Parkway, Fairfax - Conference
Room 9/10
Saturday, March 14, 2:30 p.m.

Sully District Budget Meeting
Rocky Run Middle School - Cafeteria -
4400 Stringfellow Road, Chantilly
Wednesday, March 25, 7 p.m.

Braddock District Budget Meeting
Braddock Government Center, 9002
Burke Lake Road, Burke - Braddock
Hall
Wednesday, March 11, 7:30 p.m.

Chairman Bulova's Community
Dialogue on the Budget, South
South County Center, 8350 Richmond
Highway, Alexandria - Room 221
Saturday, March 14, 10 a.m.

5 Things to Know about the Budget

- ❖ One penny change in the real estate tax rate, currently \$1.09, is worth \$22.6 million.
- ❖ The average 2014 home selling price, \$517,000, has still not reached its previous peak value of \$543,271 achieved in 2005.
- ❖ Direct office vacancy rate was 15.2 percent as of mid-year 2014, the highest office vacancy rate since 1991.
- ❖ Fairfax County Public Schools request \$14 million more than is in the current proposed budget. Schools ask for a 3.99 percent increase; the current county budget proposal includes 3.43 percent increase over last year.
- ❖ School Age Child Care (SACC) fees restructured to generate revenue and to better reflect income levels and affordability for participating families. Full paying families will see an increase of 8 percent.

Fairfax County REAL ESTATE

2015 Assessments by Area

Hunter Mill Supervisor **Cathy Hudgins (D)** saw no change in her home assessment. This year, her home was worth \$638,100, same as last year.



Dranesville Supervisor **John Foust (D)** saw a 0.75% increase in his property value when compared to 2014. The county valued Foust's house at \$2,917,660 last year and \$2,939,290 this year.



Mason Supervisor **Penelope Gross (D)** saw her home value go up 4.91% from \$440,970 in 2014 to \$462,630 in 2015.



Lee Supervisor **Jeff McKay (D)** saw his assessment go up 9.07% from \$710,220 in 2014 to \$774,620 in 2015.



Braddock Supervisor **John Cook (R)** saw a 4.68% increase in the value of his home over the last year. Cook's home was assessed at \$634,760 in 2014 and \$664,480 in 2015.



Fairfax County Chairman **Sharon Bulova (D)** saw her home value go up 7.36% from \$601,550 in 2014 to \$645,380 in 2015.

Mount Vernon Supervisor **Gerry Hyland** has no property listed.



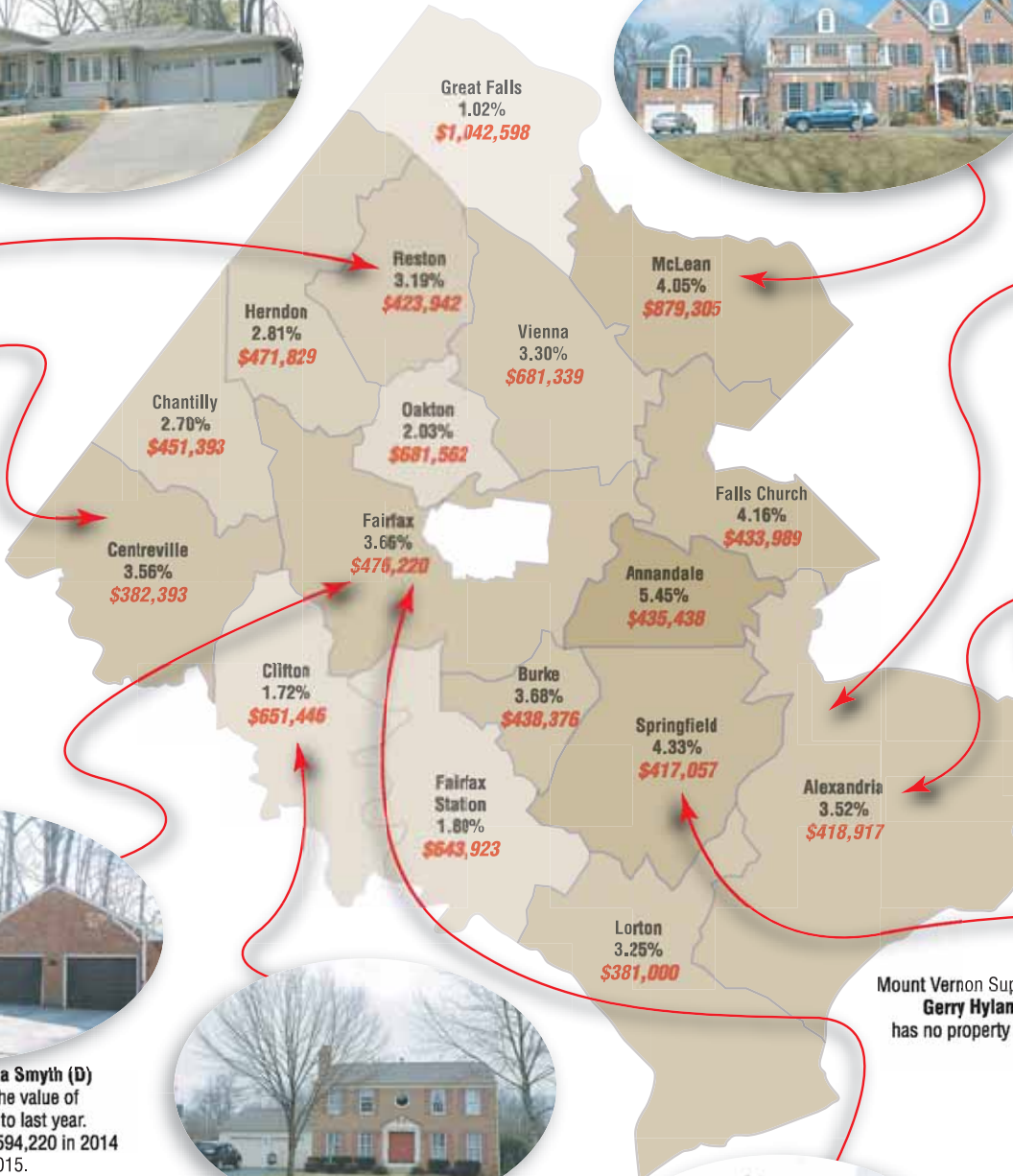
Springfield Supervisor **Patrick Herrity (R)** saw a 4.57% gain in his property value when compared to 2014. Last year, his home was worth \$573,460 and this year it is valued at \$599,660.



Providence Supervisor **Linda Smyth (D)** saw a 2.87% increase in the value of her house when compared to last year. Smyth's home was valued at \$594,220 in 2014 and \$611,280 in 2015.



Sully Supervisor **Michael Frey (R)** saw a 8.57% increase in the value of his home over the last year. Frey's home was assessed at \$252,830 in 2014 and \$274,500 in 2015.



2015 County Average (Percent Change)
Single Family Detached **\$620,080 (3.27%)**
Townhouse **\$385,338 (3.81%)**
Condos **\$259,752 (4.48%)**

ZIP CODE AREA	2014 MEAN	2015 MEAN	PERCENT CHANGE
Alexandria/Mount Vernon	404,687	418,917	3.52
Annandale	412,942	435,438	5.45
Burke	422,815	438,376	3.68
Centreville	369,253	382,393	3.56
Chantilly	439,525	451,393	2.70
Clifton	640,436	651,446	1.72
Fairfax	459,412	476,220	3.66
Fairfax Station	632,518	643,923	1.80
Falls Church	416,666	433,989	4.16
Great Falls	1,032,117	1,042,598	1.02
Herndon	458,919	471,829	2.81
Lorton	369,023	381,000	3.25
McLean	845,113	879,305	4.05
Oakton	668,009	681,562	2.03
Reston	410,846	423,942	3.19
Springfield	399,742	417,057	4.33
Vienna	659,582	681,339	3.30

for single family, townhouses and condominiums

The average assessed value of a single family home in Fairfax County for 2015 is \$620,080, up 3.27%

SOURCE: FAIRFAX COUNTY

NEWS

'Horse and Hound,' oil on canvas, by Leslie Anthony.



Leslie Anthony's 'Horse and Hound' on Exhibit at Katie's Coffee House

Leslie Anthony is the guest artist exhibiting at Katie's Coffee House (the Old Brogue), 760 Walker Road, Great Falls in March 2015. Titled "Horses and Hounds," the show consists of oil paintings mostly of Virginia Equine scenes plus one acrylic surprise. "There is so much energy when one paints horses, whether running, jumping or sniffing a hound, or even just standing there. My canvas is my storyboard and my paintings are the real story," said Anthony who lives in Reston. photo, or this one is not the correct size, please let me know. The oil painting is entitled "Horse and Hound" 16" X 20".

"I did not intend to become such an avid admirer of horses to the

point that they are what I love to paint most. We had horses when I was little and I knew I loved them, but a few years ago I was introduced to a wonderful retired Thoroughbred in Great Falls, and we just connected. I was riding him one day and he turned his head around to sniff my boot. What a wonderful image that was with his muscles flexed and his beautiful soft eye. 'I need to paint you Blue,' and that was the beginning of a wonderful journey. Blue flew off my brush and onto the canvas," said Anthony. Anthony is a member of Artists on The Green, a Great Falls studio and gallery, Great Falls Studios, a premier consortium of local artists, AiM (Artists in Middleburg) and League of Reston Artists.

WEEK IN GREAT FALLS

Comstock Announces Congressional Art Competition

U.S. Rep. Barbara Comstock (R-10) announced the 2015 Congressional Art Competition for the 10th Congressional District. The competition is open to all high school students who reside in the District. The winner of the competition will have their piece of art displayed in the United States Capitol. Comstock is a member of the Congressional Art Caucus and started

the House Arts Caucus in the Virginia General Assembly.

"I am looking forward to seeing what interesting and innovative art the students create," said Congresswoman Comstock.

Students should drop-off their completed artwork on March 25, between 1 to 6 p.m. at Enterprise Hall on the campus of the George Washington Virginia Science & Technology Campus. All art submitted will be on display from April 3 to May 7 on the campus of VSTC. Art submitted must be ready to hang and entries are lim

SEE WEEK, PAGE 7

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History Comes Alive at Forestville Elementary

History came alive as fourth-graders at Forestville Elementary School Monday, Feb. 23, assumed identities of famous Virginians in the school's annual Living Wax Museum. Each student conducted his or her own research for several weeks about a character — often visiting historic homesites and museums — and created a report and supporting poster about their characters childhood, adult life, accomplishments, and little-known facts. Students brought in artifacts about their chosen character to support their one-minute speech delivered in costume as their character. Pictured is Nancy Crotty's class.

In the front row are Tyler Wenks portraying the Civil War's "Grey Ghost" Col. John S. Mosby, Mireille Rothmeijer crooning melodies as Ella Fitzgerald, Jenny Peng as abolitionist and humanitarian Harriet Tubman, Sofia Garrison as famous nurse and American Red Cross Founder Clara Barton, Tyler Bowman as President John Tyler, Armaan Pandey discussed President Thomas Jefferson's role in Virginia and our developing nation, and Andrew Stoica delivered Patrick Henry's famous line "Give me liberty or give me death."

Standing in the back row are Daren Mosleh as Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall, Jamison Huang as Chief Powhatan discussed his role working with Jamestown settlers, Ellie McFadden discussed Belle Boyd's role as a Confederate spy, Mallory Edwards demonstrated en-



PHOTO BY CHRISTINA TYLER WENKS

Forestville Elementary fourth-graders present annual Living Wax Museum.

thusiasm of Olympic Gold-medalist Gabby Douglas, McKenna McConnell was First Lady Dolley Madison, Ananya Anand discussed her life as Singer Patsy Cline, Nash Hoover recanted experiences and exploratory expeditions as William Clark, Bert Whaley became John Smith whose life was saved by Pocohontas, Nicholas Guagliano taught classmates and parents about President Abraham Lincoln's accomplishments, Smo Tyini talked about tennis player Arthur Ashe, and Owen Ruskavich became President George Washington.

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COMMUNITY



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Matthew King and Helena Backus make tarts like the Queen of Hearts.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Preschoolers Celebrate Valentine's Day

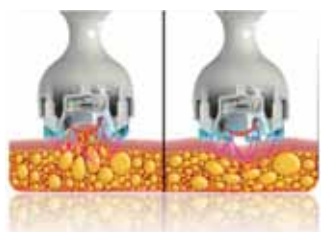
The St. Francis Creche preschool in Great Falls recently celebrated Valentine's Day with several class activities.

Purple class students making Valentine's bags.



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WEEK IN GREAT FALLS

FROM PAGE 5

ited to two per student. On the evening of May 4, the First, Second, Third, Honorable Mention, and Best In Show awards will be announced. For information and guidelines about the 2015 Congressional Art Competition go to Congresswoman Comstock's website. Competitors can also contact Lucy Norment in the Congresswoman's office at 703-404-6903 or by email at Lucy.Norment@mail.house.gov

Friends and Refreshments at Forestville Schoolhouse

Great Falls Senior Center Meet Up group invites you to come and enjoy friends and refreshments in a game of Scrabble, Bridge, Dominos, and Mah Jongg on Feb. 26 from 1-3 p.m.

History Alive at Great Falls Senior Center Event

The Great Falls Senior Center (GFSC) will have Mary Ann Jung, award-winning actress; Smithsonian scholar, writer, and director recreate one of history's most fascinating women, Rosie The Riveter at the March 3 event. Jung researches and writes her own scripts, and performs in the authentic costumes, accents, and attitudes for her characters' eras. She has appeared on CNN, the Today Show, and Good Morning America. She has been a lead actress and Director of Renaissance History and Shakespearean Language at the Maryland Renaissance Festival for 32 years. She performed as queen and was Director with the Florida Renaissance Festival from 1994-2006; she was Director of Street Theater and Family Performances for Artscape.

The March 3 event will be held at the United Methodist Church, 10100 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. The program runs from 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m. and includes lunch; a modest contribution is appreciated. Reservations are a must. To reserve, email Polly Fitzgerald at pollyfitz1@verizon.net or call 703-759-4345.

The event is being sponsored by Great Falls Assisted Living (A Memory Care Community), 1121 Reston Avenue, Herndon.

Great Falls Senior Center has partnered with the Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services in all ventures and events.

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OPINION

Managing Mental Illness in Jails

Natasha McKenna's death provides window on national concern.

A national report released on Feb. 11 highlighted the prevalence of people with mental illness incarcerated in local jails.

"Serious mental illness, which includes bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and major depression, affects an estimated 14.5 percent of men and 31 percent of women in jails — rates that are four to six times higher than in the general population. ... While most people with serious mental illness in jails, both men and women, enter jail charged with minor, nonviolent crimes, they end up staying in jail for longer periods of time." See vera.org.

Natasha McKenna, a woman with a long history of severe mental illness, died on Feb. 8, five days after being repeatedly shocked with a taser, restrained, hooded and forcibly removed from her cell by six deputy sheriffs "pursuant to its protocols for managing combative inmates."

McKenna, a small woman according to press

reports, had been held in the Fairfax County Detention Center since Jan. 26, on a warrant from the City of Alexandria. Fairfax deputies were forcibly extracting her from her cell so she could be transported to the Alexandria jail.

Here is part of the police release on the incident:

"During the struggle to restrain McKenna, a member of the Sheriff's Emergency Response Team deployed a conducted energy weapon (Taser) on McKenna. While being restrained, deputies placed a spit net (which is designed to restrict and prevent spitting) on McKenna.

EDITORIAL

A nurse from the ADC medical staff was present at that time to check on her prior to transport and cleared her for transport. Deputies attempted to put her in a medical transport chair, but McKenna continued to be combative and was moved to a restraint chair for transport."

To understand a little of what was happening, search for images of "spit net" and "prisoner restraint chair."

When the emergency response team was getting ready to load McKenna into a vehicle, "medical personnel from the Fairfax County Sheriff's Office checked McKenna and determined she was experiencing a medical emergency."

McKenna never regained consciousness.

The incident was recorded on video, but "the video is currently retained as evidence by detectives from the Fairfax County Police Department and will not be released at this time."

Less than two weeks after McKenna's death, the public knows a lot more about the details of this incident than previous cases involving the Fairfax County Police, but questions of what happened, how and why, greatly outnumber answers.

It is standard operating procedure in the United States to warehouse disruptive people with mental illness in jails. A 2006 Special Report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated that 705,600 mentally ill adults were incarcerated in state prisons, 78,800 in Federal prisons and 479,900 in local jails, according to the National Institute for Corrections.

We have to ask what constitutes humane, effective treatment for people with mental illness, and often substance use disorders, who end up in jails. Are the brutal images of Natasha McKenna's handling a common experience for people with severe mental illness in jails? While deaths resulting from such incidents are rare, they do occur. What can be done to provide treatment?

— MARY KIMM

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Help Find Rocky

To the Editor:

Our family's beloved dog, Rocky has been lost since Saturday at 5 p.m. — last seen in McLean (intersection of Old Dominion Drive and Linway Terrace). While on a walk, Rocky began chasing an SUV and after his leash became tangled in the wheel, the leash became unhooked. We're hoping Rocky isn't too injured, because he was terrified and able to run away. Neighbors reported seeing him late Saturday, but we haven't seen him since then.

Rocky is shy, and is probably very scared right now, so the best way to try to get him to come is with food and then to gently put fingers through his collars when he comes near to grab the food. If found, anyone can contact Sean Kim at 703-489-7600 or sean.kim@agillence.net.

Suejin Kim
McLean



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Vital Info: Name — Rocky, Age: 6, Weight: 35 Lbs, Breed: Cattle Dog Mix, Color: white with a large brown spot over his right eye and ear, small brown spots all over.

Oversight Needed in Police Shooting Cases

To the Editor:

Kudos and thanks for your recent editorials voicing the concern of many Fairfax County citizens in connection with the investigation of police shootings.

James Madison said of government that we must "oblige it to control itself" through checks and balances, including vigilant oversight of administration. It is difficult to conceive where Board of Supervisors oversight is more needed than over a group—even a group as honorable and courageous as our police officers—entrusted to exercise coercive powers, up to and including life and death. The Board of Supervisors should fulfill that oversight function, starting with investigative hearings into the reasons for the secrecy shrouding the shootings identified in your editorial. State Sen. Barbara Favola and our new Del. Kathleen Murphy may also wish to consider whether to propose statutory changes to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

Bruce Ellis Fein
Great Falls

Supporting Deer Management

To the Editor:

Thank you for the excellent article on deer management in Fairfax County ("A Time to Hunt?" - Connection, February 18-24, 2015). One deer can carry 1,000 ticks, and approximately 25 percent of ticks in our county carry an infectious agent. In addition to borrelia burgdorferi, the tick can carry babesiosis, bartonella, and other pathogens. Current methods of testing humans for such diseases are unreliable, resulting in possibly thousands of undiagnosed patients in our county. Nationwide, 300,000 new cases of Lyme disease were estimated by the CDC last year, a 10-fold increase over prior estimates. As a former Lyme sufferer, support group leader and current patient advocate, I see the devastation these diseases cause to our residents. From bedridden children to suicidal teens to failed marriages and economic ruin, these diseases take a toll on more than just one's car and garden.

I appreciate all the county is doing to reduce the number of deer in our yard!

Marjorie Veiga
Vienna

Great Falls CONNECTION

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LETTERS

Survey, Video Document Deer Challenge

To the Editor:

Ken Moore's article on the impact of growing deer herds on our local forests ("A Time to Hunt?" - Connection, February 18-24, 2015) was a good overview of the issues facing our community and a

description of some of the ways in which residents can help ensure that our local forests remain for the next generation. The article mentioned the survey by the Great Falls Citizens Association; residents interested in the whole survey, including the incidence of Lyme Disease in our community, can find it at

www.gfca.org. I'd also highly recommend a video that we showed, in part, at the January GFCA town hall meeting. It's called Lords of Nature and it graphically shows how Yellowstone National Park's ecology was adversely affected when growing deer and elk populations overgrazed it, as well as the steps the National Park Service took to re-establish a balance. That video is also freely available on the GFCA website.

Bill Canis

Vice President, GFCA

To have community events listed in the Connection, send to north@connectionnewspapers.com. The deadline for submissions is the Friday prior to publication.

BULLETIN BOARD

THURSDAY/FEB. 26

Computer Tutoring. 3:30-5:30 p.m. Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Learn how to enhance your computer skills by working with a tutor. All are welcome.

Basic Computer Skills. 3:30 p.m. Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. One-on-one tutoring in basic computer skills. Call to sign up.

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

Coaching for Better Parenting. 7 p.m. Dolley Madison Library, 1244 Oak Ridge Ave., McLean. First in a series offering tips and guidance for becoming a skillful parent, presented by a team of expert coaches. Adults.

for children. Coffee and conversation for grownups!

McLean Art Society Meeting. 10 a.m. - noon.

McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Avenue, McLean. Jane McElvany Coonce, who has taught art for Arlington County for 35 years will be the featured speaker at the meeting of the McLean Art Society. Coonce will be demonstrating techniques for watercolor portraits using base colors and transparent overlays. She will also discuss mounting watercolors so that a mat and glass are unnecessary. Guests are welcome.

SATURDAY/FEB. 28

"Why Don't My Kids Listen to Me?" for parents of children 5-12. 10 - 11:30 a.m. Waples Mill Elementary School, 11509 Waples Mill Road, Oakton. The nonprofit Parent Encouragement Program will offer a free parenting workshop

FRIDAY/FEB. 27

Playdate Café. 10 a.m. Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Toys and play space

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PET CONNECTION



Angela Boyer and her Doberman Marz in a snow day last week in Great Falls.



Ellen Ash and her cat Mr. Puss, a 6-year-old Norwegian forest cat.

PHOTOS BY PATRICK KORTEN



Jill Keller and her dog Louie.



Jill Keller, with Black Cat and Louie.



Sharon Bulova with her cats Frodo and Sam.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

When Sam Met Frodo

“Sam and Frodo are both rescue cats. Frodo, the big orange guy with the furry feet, came from Home Alone Feline Rescue in 2011. He is part Maine Coon and part American bobtail. Lou and I had been thinking about getting a second cat as a companion for Frodo when I ran into Lee District School Board member Tammy Koufax at a community event in Springfield in August 2013. Tammy and her kids were fostering a litter of feral kittens that had been found behind a restaurant in

Washington D.C. When Lou and I saw Tammy’s photo of the smallest kitten, a tiny tiger tabby, we fell in love. Eventually, so did Frodo, once she got over Sam trying to steal his toys and occasionally snatching his treats away. We love watching the two cats chase each other around. Animals add so much to your life!”

— SHARON BULOVA,
CHAIRMAN OF THE FAIRFAX COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Best Friends of Great Falls

The late British-American writer Christopher Hitchens once wrote, “Owners of dogs will have noticed that, if you provide them with food and water and shelter and affection, they will think you are god. Whereas owners of cats are compelled to realize that, if you provide them with food and water and shelter and affection, they draw the conclusion that *they* are gods.”

I have owned both, and I think Hitchens was right, although he was an atheist, and thus did not believe in “god” or “gods.”

Great Falls is filled with pet owners who may not quite worship their pets, but love them dearly all the same. To feature a mere handful here is to do no more than scratch the surface of pet owners in these parts (the pets themselves, of course, are scratching everything else in sight). And while most of our pets are dogs and cats, this is Great Falls after all, and more than a few have horses as well.

Emma Keller is among the horse owners, and her Arabian horse Alex spends his days at Southdown Farm, just down the road from L’Auberge Chez Francois. Emma describes his personality as that of “a giant golden retriever.”

Emma’s mother Jill Keller enjoys the company of smaller traditional pets, a Yorkshire Terrier named Louie, and a rescue cat named Black Cat.

Louie is among the smaller dogs so popular in the area, while Angela Boyer’s Doberman, named Marz, is at the other end of the spectrum: nearly as tall as she is when he stands up. “He’s an active, energetic teenager,” Boyer says, “and he has a lot of energy to let out when he get the chance to run outside and play.”



Patrick Korten with his cat Purrry.

Energy is not a word that Ellen Ash would use in the same sentence as Mr. Puss, her 6-year-old Norwegian Forest Cat. “He’s a 25 pound bundle of love,” she says, and she loves all the extra hair that grows between the pads on his paws. “They almost look like extra toes,” Ash marvels.

Harry Truman, who served in Washington as a senator, vice president and president, once said, “If you want a friend in Washington, buy a dog.” Well, Harry, my pet is a cat, an orange tabby named Purrry. A friend found him near a construction site off Colvin Run Road. He’s still a kitten, and although



Emma Keller and her Arabian horse Alex, who spends his days at Southdown Farm, just down the road from L’Auberge Chez Francois.

some day I suppose that he’ll slow down and sleep a lot, right now he’s a bundle of energy. He’s rather affectionate for a cat, and he’s a good friend too.

— PATRICK KORTEN

SPECIAL CONNECTIONS CALENDAR

Advertising Deadlines are the previous Thursday unless noted.

MARCH

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

APRIL

4/1/2015.....Wellbeing – Senior Living Pullout
Easter Sunday is April 5
4/8/2015.....HomeLifeStyle
4/15/2015.....A+ Camps & Schools
4/22/2015.....Real Estate Pullout – New Homes
4/29/2015.....A+ Camps & Schools Pullout
4/29/2015.....Mother’s Day Celebrations, Dining & Gifts I

MAY

5/6/2015.....McLean Day Pullout
5/6/2015.....Mother’s Day Dining & Gifts II
5/6/2015.....Wellbeing
Mother’s Day is May 10

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PET CONNECTION

My Wish: Guinea Pig

Do you ever have an item that you would really, really like to have? Well this is the cute little fella I'm dying to have.

The object I would like to have is a guinea pig. I would like to have a guinea pig, because they are small, so I don't have to have a big cage for it, they are playful, so I will never get bored of it, they are quiet, so when I am sleeping I will not get woken up by it, because a lot of hamster and guinea pigs are very noisy, and you cannot sleep very well if they are in your room. Finally they are very fluffy and soft, so I can just relax with the guinea pig lying on my lap.

You can easily buy a guinea pig at almost any pet store, which is very convenient for me, because there are lots of pet stores fairly close to me. Also when my sister's hamster passes away, I can maybe get a guinea pig, if it's ok with my mom of course! Also I am very organized, and I would already have its cage, water/ food, and toys ready for him before he even comes home with us.

What you should have before buying a guinea pig:

1. food
2. water
3. a cage
4. chew toys
5. extra hay



Rose Boos, of Great Falls, with her guinea pig Cuddles.

There are not too many things you need to have for guinea pig! I hope I can persuade my mom to buy me a guinea pig. Wish me luck!!!

— ROSE "RJ" BOOS,
GRADE 5, GREAT FALLS ELEMENTARY

Meet Tango, Paddington and Peanut

Vanessa Doyle, of Great Falls, and her three dogs: Tango on right, Paddington left and Peanut in the middle at Riverbend Park.



PHOTOS BY JOAN BRADY

Priceless Puppies, Future Service Dogs

Photographer Joan Brady of Great Falls volunteers with a nonprofit called paws4people.org which raises and trains service dogs, including psychiatric assistance dogs for veterans with PTSD and assistance dogs for children with disabilities. Brady documents the dogs from birth.

"We like to document each litter with a group shot. When puppies are just born, they sleep quite a bit, so you would think they would be easy to photograph," says Brady. "But they are actually quite squirmy. And as they get older, they are more mobile, so you have to get creative about finding ways to corral them as much as possible. Getting great shots requires patience, lots of extra hands and a good bit of luck."

Brady has started a new Facebook group to showcase the cutest puppy shots. Check it out at "Priceless Puppies." To find out more about [paws4people](http://paws4people.org), go to paws4people.org.



REAL ESTATE NOTES

Three Local Keller Williams Teams Among Top 100 in USA

Ron Cathell, the owner and operating principal, and Amina Basic, CEO of Keller Williams McLean/Great Falls office, announced three teams made 2014 "TOP 100 Teams" Nationwide for Keller Williams. The following teams made it to the top 100 nationally: The Belt Team, HBC Realty Group and Ron Cathell Team ranked among the best in the country out of more than 100,000 associates. All three teams consist of a long time area residents. "This ranking affords them access not only to tools, technologies, and resources that uniquely benefit their clients. That's a win-win for us and for our clients. Our company motto is 'God, Family, Business.' We live by that. And so it's even more gratifying to be able to help so many clients find that 'perfect home,' as well as help them sell their properties quickly and for the highest price possible, so they can make their dreams come true. All three teams are family businesses and they treat their clients like family," said Basic.

Keller Williams McLean/Great Falls office is ranked #17 in the country by production. For more information call Amina Basic at 703-672-0687.

Weichert, Realtors Recognizes Top Regional Associate

Bruce L. Green, regional vice president of Weichert, Realtors, announced Sales Associate J.D. Callander of the McLean/Dolley Madison office was individually recognized for her exceptional industry success during the month of January. A top producer, Callander led the region, which comprised offices throughout Fairfax, Loudoun, Fauquier and Delaware counties, for resale listings and resale dollar volume.

She can be reached in Weichert's McLean/Dolley Madison office at 1313 Dolley Madison Boulevard or by phone at (703) 760-8880.

A Home Sellers Seminar in Great Falls

Keller Williams Realty, 774A Walker Rd, Great Falls, will host a free Home sellers seminar on Sunday, March 1, 2-4 p.m. RSVP: Kathyshea@mris.com or 703-795-3946

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CALENDAR

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

THROUGH WEDNESDAY/MARCH 11

Ice Skating at Tysons Corner Center.

Monday-Thursday, 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.; Friday-Saturday, 11 a.m. - 11 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. Tysons Corner Outdoor Center, 1961 Chain Bridge Road, Tysons. Adults, \$10; Child/Senior/Military, \$9; Skate Rental, \$6; Group of 10+, \$12 and includes skates

FRIDAY/FEB. 27

Concert: John Eaton. 8 p.m. Wolf Trap, 1635 Trap Road, Vienna. 8 p.m. Renowned pianist, vocalist, musicologist, and humorist delivers rendition of cherished American songs. Tommy Cecil, Bass. Tickets \$25-27.

Ice Skating. 3:30 - 10 p.m. Old Firehouse Teen Center, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean.

SATURDAY/FEB. 28

Mardi Gras Gala. 8 p.m. American Legion Post 180 Patriot Hall, 330 N. Center Street, Vienna. Music by Terry Lee Ryan (New Orleans' own). Heavy Hors D'oeuvres Costumes optional. Prize for best costume. Tickets: \$35 can be purchased at Post 180 or Online at <http://Legion180.net> Open to the public.

Concert: Big Sam's Funky Nation. 8 p.m. Wolf Trap, 1635 Trap Road, Vienna. 8 p.m. Join these New Orleans "hot purveyors of funk, (Miami News Times) for urban funk



Catch Antigone Rising playing on March 6 at Jammin' Java. The girls will be bringing their trademark sound - a fusion of country, pop, rock and folk.

electrified by distinct trombone riffs and rhythmic, jazzy beats. Tickets \$24.

For more information, visit www.viennacommunityband.org or call 703-403-9179.

SUNDAY/MARCH 1

125th Anniversary Town of Vienna Concert. 7 p.m. Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street SE, Vienna. A free concert featuring music celebrating the 125th anniversary of the Town of Vienna. The band will perform Johann Strauss's "Radetsky March," Franz von Suppe's "Morning, Noon, and Night in Vienna," Aaron Copland's "Down a Country Lane," Pavel Tschesnokoff's "Salvation is Created," Stephen Bull's "Bond . . . James Bond," and other favorites.

TUESDAY/MARCH 3

Speaker on Honoring Military at Arlington Cemetery. 12:15 p.m. Trinity United Methodist Church, McLean. The McLean Woman's Club will host as speaker Paula McKinley, chairman of The Arlington Ladies, a group that honors fallen military members during burial at Arlington and supports their families. Reservations: 703-356-3646.

<cal1>Friday/March 6
Antigone Rising. 8 p.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Avenue E, Vienna. The girls will be bringing their trademark sound - a fusion of country, pop, rock and folk. Tickets: \$15-\$18.

Altan. 8 p.m. Wolf Trap, 1551 Trap Road, Vienna. One of Ireland's most respected traditional Celtic music acts blends lively strings and ethereal vocals to transport listeners to the heart of the Emerald Isle. Tickets: \$25.

SATURDAY/MARCH 7

Great Falls Grange Reopening Ceremony. 10 a.m. 9818 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. John Foust, Dranesville District Supervisor, and the Fairfax County Park Authority hold the Re-Opening Ceremony of the Great Falls Grange. The ceremony will be held during the Great Falls Farmers Market.

Pancake Breakfast. Vienna Volunteer Fire Department, 400 Center Street South, Vienna. 8 a.m. - Noon. All you can eat pancakes, sausage, bacon, juice and coffee. Adults \$8, Seniors 65+ \$7, Children under 12 \$6, Children under 4 free. There will also be tours of the fire equipment available. All proceeds go to the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department to assist in purchasing life saving fire equipment. Come have a delicious breakfast, spend time with the members of the VVFD and the community. For more information contact: Joanie@vvfd.org

Salon Simone and Med Spa Cultura. 6-10 p.m. Tysons Corner Mall, 1961 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Come by and bring a friend or two for a sip, a bite and mingle at Tyson's Corner Center's newest salon and spa.

SUNDAY/MARCH 8

Keaton Simons. 7:30 p.m. Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Avenue E, Vienna. Keaton Simons' music has been heard in dozens of feature films and television shows, including *Private*



The Vienna Arts Society invites the public to discover how Potomac artist Jack Harding creates subtle textural effects with watercolors on distressed rice paper on March 12 at 10:30 a.m. at the Vienna Art Center, 115 Pleasant St. NW, Vienna.

PET FRIENDLY EVENTS

SATURDAY/MARCH 7

Fun Dog Show. 11 a.m. Market Square, 301 King Street, Alexandria. Register your dogs to win the contests ranging from Best Tail Wag to Best Irish Costume. The show starts at 11:15 a.m., and afterwards all dogs are welcome to walk in the annual Old Town Alexandria St. Patrick's Day Parade. Register and learn more at http://www.ballyshanners.org/parade/ParadeInfo_dogshow.htm.

Practice, NCIS, Malcolm in the Middle, Crash, Hollywood Heights and Sons of Anarchy. He has also worked as a writer, musical director, singer, bassist and guitarist with notable acts like Gnarl's Barkley, Black Eyed Peas, Snoop Dogg, and Tre Hardson of The Pharcyde. His guitar playing is highly sought-after, so much so that friends and peers like Ben Harper and Josh Kelley have asked him to join them on tour and on live TV.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 11

Buckwheat Zydeco. 8 p.m. Wolf Trap, 1551 Trap Road, Vienna. Join a "Swamp-boogie joy ride" (People) as this Grammy-winning zydeco band serves up their vibrant brand of Creole music. Tickets: \$28
Great Falls Historical Society March Program. 6 p.m. Celebration of the Grange, refreshments; local memories of the Great Falls Grange, film.

THURSDAY/MARCH 12

Artist's Demonstration. 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Vienna Art Center, 115 Pleasant St. NW, Vienna. The Vienna Arts Society invites the public to discover how Potomac artist Jack Harding creates subtle textural effects with watercolors on distressed rice paper. Free. 703-319-3971.

FRIDAY/MARCH 13

Weather or Not. Vienna Art Center, 115 Pleasant St., NW, Vienna. Tuesdays - Saturdays, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. March 3 - April 4. Members of the Vienna Arts Society bring Mother Nature. Meet the artists, to include National Gallery of Art copyist Dick Neff and featured artist Ginger Sanaie, at a reception Friday, March

FRIDAY-SUNDAY/MARCH 27-29

Super Pet Expo & Doggie

Kissing Contest. Dulles Expo Center, Chantilly. The Super Pet Expo is the largest, most amazing event for animal lovers in the DC Metro. Learn, shop and be entertained with hundreds of vendors and fun activities. Buy tickets at <http://www.superpetexpo.com/tickets> and use code NOVADOG to save \$3. Before the expo on Saturday morning, join hundreds of other dogs and the people who love them to attempt to set a doggie-kissing record.

13, 7 - 9 p.m. Free and open to the public.

FRIDAY/MARCH 20

Enter the Haggis. 8 p.m. Wolf Trap, 1551 Trap Road, Vienna. Experimental roots-rock stalwarts push the boundaries of Celtic music with vigorous performances and inventive albums. Tickets: \$28.

TUESDAY/MARCH 24

Annual Children's Printmaking Workshop. 4-5 p.m. Patrick Henry Library, 101 Maple Avenue E, Vienna. The Vienna Arts Society invites children ages 7 - 12 to create prints using fish, vegetables, and more at a workshop. To register, call the Children's Librarian at 703-938-0405.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 25

Karla Bonoff. Wolf Trap, 1551 Trap Road, Vienna. A velvety-voiced, folk-pop singer/songwriter whose heartfelt ballads have been covered by Linda Ronstadt, Bonnie Raitt and Wynonna Judd. Tickets: \$27.

ONGOING

Tai Chi Beginners' Practice.

Through March 21. Free Tai Chi beginners' practice. Open to all. Every Saturday, 8-9 a.m. St. Luke's Catholic School Gymnasium, 7005 Georgetown Pike, McLean.

Free Comedy Showcase. Thursdays 8:30 p.m., at Kalypso's Sports Tavern, 1617 Washington Plaza N., Lake Anne Village Center, Reston. Kalypso's hosts weekly comedy shows that feature some of the best national touring and local comedians in the area. Free of charge.

2ND ANNUAL Boys & Girls Club Fairfax Casino Night

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We invite your organization to consider sponsorship opportunities for our 2nd Annual Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Washington, Fairfax Region Casino Night.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington/Fairfax Region help boys and girls of all backgrounds build confidence, develop character, and acquire skills fundamental to becoming productive, civic-minded, responsible adults. BGCW provides a safe and positive environment for our youth.

PET CONNECTION

Playing with Cuddles and Warriors

**Rose and Gloria Boos
with their guinea pigs
Cuddles and Warriors.**

- MELODEE BOOS,
GREAT FALLS



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Riley at a "Puppy Party" that Tanya and her brother threw to celebrate Riley being cancer-free for six months.

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The story was written by 9-year-old Tanya Ray, after the death of her much-loved 10-year-old dog due to cancer.

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Langley Girls' Swim Brings Home State Title

Langley boys' team wins conference, places third at regional and state meets.

The Langley girls' swim and dive team won the VHSL 6A state championship on Feb. 21 in Richmond by narrowly edging out three-time defending state champion Oakton, 206-204.

The Lady Saxons already held the 2014-2015 Conference 6 and 6A North region titles when they headed to Richmond Friday for the Virginia 6A championships, but state team members, Joanne Fu, Grace Gent, Micaela Grassi, Fiona Muir, Amy Owens, Michelle Owens, Celeste Pace and Isabella Rongione, knew the state title would be a three-way battle between Langley and formidable opponents Robinson and Oakton. Winning the state title would require a collective team effort with top swims from each of them. At the end of the day, they succeeded by outscoring their opponents with multiple top-16 finishes despite not having any divers and not winning any one event.



The Langley girls' swim team captured the 6A state title on Feb. 21. Pictured from left: Fiona Muir, Micaela Grassi, Amy Owens, Michelle Owens, Joanne Fu, Celeste Pace, Isabella Rongione and Grace Gent.

PHOTO BY
SUSAN MUIR

The Langley boys' state team placed third behind powerhouses Oakton and Robinson. Team members included: Garrett Walsh, Carter Bennett, Justin Rose, Devin Truong, Ryan Ha, Alex Gomez and Casey Storch. Both Langley teams are coached by Ryan Jackson and Kristin Sandridge.

The state meet wrapped up a phenomenal 2014-2015 season for Langley during which team members amassed not only many personal bests but also numerous school and conference records, as well as automatic All-American and All-American consideration times.

Isabella Rongione achieved automatic All-American times in the 200 free and 500 free.

All-American consideration times were achieved by: Michelle Owens (200 free, 500 free); Casey Storch (200 IM); Carter Bennett (50 free); Micaela Grassi (100 fly); Ryan Ha, Garrett Walsh, Devin Truong and Carter Bennett (200 medley relay); Micaela Grassi, Amy Owens, Isabella Rongione and Michelle Owens (200 free relay); Amy Owens, Michelle Owens, Isabella Rongione and Fiona Muir (400 free relay).

School and conference records were set by: Fiona Muir (100 back, Langley and conference record); Carter Bennett (50 free, Langley and conference record); Micaela Grassi (100 fly, Langley and conference record); Casey Storch (500 free, Langley record and 200 free, conference record); Isabella Rongione (500 free, Langley record); Ryan Ha, Garrett Walsh, Devin Truong and Carter Bennett (200 medley relay, conference record); Carter Bennett, Justin Rose, Alex Gomez and Casey Storch (200 free relay, Langley and conference record); Casey Storch, Devin Truong, Justin Rose & Garrett Walsh (400 free relay, conference record); Amy Owens, Micaela Grassi, Isabella Rongione and Michelle Owens (200 free relay, conference record); Amy Owens, Michelle Owens, Isabella Rongione and Fiona Muir (400 free relay, Langley and conference record).

In addition to the state team members noted above, the following were also members of the conference and/or regional teams: Erica Barton, Sarah Campos, Sophia Campos, Danielle Fairchild, Madison Fletcher, Miranda Fletcher, Anya McKee, Lindsey McKula, Ana Mulligan, Aneeka Murjany, Maggie Natal, Caitlin Nguyen, Haley Simkins, Emily Wallach, Chase Bradshaw, Mason Greenblatt, Terry Keffer, Alex Lim, Trey McKula, Nick Omsberg, Eric Owens, Riley Pfadenhauer, Duncan Proxmire, Adam Speers, Andy Tan and Ryan Windus.

McLean Gymnastics Wins 6A State Championship

Highlanders first Fairfax County champ since Langley in 2004.

BY JON ROETMAN
THE CONNECTION

The McLean gymnastics team pulled off the trifecta Friday.

After winning their fourth consecutive Conference 6/Liberty District championship and capturing the 6A North region title, the Highlanders finished the 2014-15 season by winning the state championship on Feb. 20 at Patriot High School.

McLean posted a score of 145, edging Stafford (144.75) to win the team title. Ocean Lakes finished third (143.9) and Battlefield took fourth (139.175).

"It was such an exciting experience!" McLean gymnast Jacqueline Green wrote in an email. "We had no idea what the outcome would be throughout the competition so we were surprised and thrilled by the news. We have all worked so hard to get to this point and it feels great to finish my senior year first in the state."

McLean, led by head coach Courtney Lesson, is the first Fairfax County school to win a VHSL state gymnastics title since Langley accomplished the feat in 2004.

"We really had not competed against

many of the teams at the state competition but we knew they were all stacked with talent, so that was definitely intimidating," McLean senior Lizzy Brown-Kaiser wrote in an email. "Going into the competition, the entire team was really focused on hitting our routines and having fun while doing it."

MCLEAN CAME CLOSE to winning it all last season. After winning their conference and finishing region runner-up to Washington-Lee for the third straight season, the Highlanders placed second at the 2014 state meet, finishing 1.225 points behind Frank W. Cox.

"We were all motivated to live up to the high expectations that we set for ourselves after last year," Green wrote. "We wanted to make this season even better than the last."

"This year we had a lot of depth with the addition of several talented freshmen to the team," Brown-Kaiser wrote. "I think everyone on the team improved immensely throughout the course of the competitive season and peaked at states. We all became a lot more consistent and confident with our skills with the help of our coach, Courtney Lesson."



PHOTO BY MIKE GALLAGHER

The McLean gymnastics team won the 2015 6A state championship on Feb. 20 at Patriot High School.

Green and Brown-Kaiser were two primary reasons McLean captured its first state title. Green finished with the Highlanders' top score on floor (9.525), vault (9.425) and beam (9.35). She also scored 8.8 on bars.

"I felt great about the meet," Green wrote. "I had my best individual all-around score of the season. It was a great way to finish up my last meet with the team. It feels very

gratifying to have all of our hard work pay off. ... We knew that we needed to have our best meet of the season to pull off first place. It was an incredible team effort and I am very proud of everyone."

Brown-Kaiser scored 9.15 or better in each event, including 9.425 on floor. She scored 9.3 on vault, 9.25 on beam and 9.15 on bars.

"Personally, I was very satisfied with my individual performance but I was especially proud of the team," Brown-Kaiser wrote. "I was really happy that I could contribute to our team score."

Calista Parude (floor, 9.275), Carolyn Brown-Kaiser (vault, 9.15) and Mathilde Larose (vault, 9.05) each scored 9 or better in an event for the Highlanders.

Madison Schumann (8.675) and Delaney Gallagher (8.6) competed on beam for McLean.

THE INDIVIDUAL COMPETITION, originally scheduled for Feb. 21, was postponed until noon on Saturday, Feb. 28 at Patriot High School due to inclement weather concerns. Lizzy Brown-Kaiser will compete in the all-around. Green will compete on floor and vault, and Carolyn Brown-Kaiser qualified on vault.

"I hope to do some of my best routines of the season," Green wrote. "I want to finish off my high school career on a good note!"

FAITH

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

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

The Antioch Christian Church offers a time of Prayer and Healing on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. for anyone wanting encouragement and healing through prayers. People are available to pray with you or for you. Antioch Christian Church is located at 1860 Beulah Road in Vienna. www.antiochdoc.org

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

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

McLean Bible Church Fitness Class at Body & Soul Fitness. Gain balance, energy and strength at 9:45 a.m. Mondays and Fridays. Free childcare for registered students. bodyandsoul@mcleanbible.org.

St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church, 1830 Kirby Road in McLean, holds a third Sunday service every month at 10:15 a.m. which allows children to play active roles in the music and as greeters and ushers. Traditional services are every Sunday at 8:15 and 10:15 a.m.

Vienna Christian Healing Rooms are open, every Saturday, 1-5 p.m., at 8200 Bell Lane. A team of Christians is available to anyone requesting prayer. Free and open to the public. 703-698-9779 or www.viennachristianhealingrooms.com.

Chesterbrook United Methodist Church is at 1711 Kirby Road, McLean. Worship service is at 11 a.m. Sunday school is at 9:30 a.m. for adults and children. 703-356-7100 or www.ChesterbrookUMC.org.

Centering Prayer Group meets Fridays, 9:30 a.m. at Andrew Chapel United Methodist Church, 1301 Trap Road, Vienna. The hour includes a brief reading related to Centering Prayer, followed by a 20-minute prayer period. E-mail Martha Thomas at mmthomas211@hotmail.com or call the church at 703-759-3509.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington and the Jewish Outreach Institute offer the Mothers/Parents Circle, an umbrella of free educational events and resources. Jewish rituals, ethics and the creation of a Jewish home, regular meetings and group Shabbats and holidays. Participants include Sha'are Shalom, Congregation Beth Emeth, Temple Rodef Shalom and the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia. ShalomDC.org.



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Not So Late This Time



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

But real-time once again: February 20, 11 hours, approximately, after our regularly-scheduled, post-scan meeting with the oncologist at 10:00 this morning. The news could have been better, and realistically assessing, it could have been worse. But since it wasn't better, it was definitely worse. Something "fluffy" (my oncologist's description) has appeared and begun to take some kind of shape in my left lung. It's not exactly a nodule or a tumor yet, but it's something that wasn't there previously. Oddly enough, all the other tumors that we've been monitoring didn't grow, nor were there any fluid issues to consider. Nevertheless, something new seems to be forming.

In discussing its appearance with my oncologist, he said if the mass was smaller, he wouldn't be too concerned and if it was larger he'd be more concerned. But its size is in the middle. Compounding his level of concern – and complicating his medical opinion, is that I remain relatively asymptomatic, giving him no clues and/or indications to corroborate a malignancy or even a possible pneumonia. Consequently, this appointment became a serious discussion about varying options to determine a prudent course of action treating forward; the kind of appointment which we haven't had for over 18 months, since I was last hospitalized in August, 2013.

To say we've been living on easy street, accordingly, this past year and a half is a bit of an oversimplification. To say we've occasionally taken for granted my amazing good fortune is likewise a bit of a presumption. We have, however, gotten accustomed to an ebb and flow, focusing more on the good and less on the bad. But since an updated determination concerning this growth can't be made for two months, until my next CT Scan (advanced by one month due to these new circumstances), waiting, wondering and worrying will be the inescapable order of the day, week and months ahead; a bit of a different mindset than we've been used to of late. Over this interval, my treatment will continue on as usual: chemotherapy every three weeks with Alimta, so long as my kidney function allows it. In the short-term interim, I have been prescribed five days of antibiotics in case this growth is pneumonia, not cancer. Regardless, we still won't know anything for a few months, unless, of course, I develop some new symptoms.

I can't deny that receiving this news earlier today was discouraging. I'll probably need some time to assimilate it, rationalize it, understand it and ultimately deal with it. But "it" is definitely now top of mind once again, not where I want it and certainly not where I need it.

Still, life goes on, as I often say, and it's a life I've been extremely fortunate to have had, given the "13-month to two-year" prognosis I received back in late February, 2009. (I always put the "prognosis" in quotes because that's what my oncologist told Team Lourie.) In fact, next Friday is February 27th, my six-year anniversary of surviving a terminal diagnosis, I'm proud to point out. And even though I've been there and done that years longer than anticipated, doing this doesn't get any easier.

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

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