

Fairfax Station ♦ Clifton ♦ Lorton  
**CONNECTION**

# Praying in Freedom Together

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**Military families gather for a special Shabbat dinner before the service at Temple B'nai Shalom in Fairfax Station.**

## Praying in Freedom Together

**Temple B'nai Shalom recognizes veterans with special Shabbat dinner and service.**

BY TIM PETERSON  
THE CONNECTION

**L**t. Col. Jacob Kramer was concerned after finding a Star of David in a moving box. The Springfield resident was previously stationed in Morocco by the U.S. Army. Kramer said he and his family tried to “cleanse the Jewishness” out of their house there because of how dangerous it was to be one of just 3,000 Jews in the north African country.

“It’s very difficult to conceal your identity,” Kramer said. “We entered that decision with the clearest of minds, the weightiest of hearts.”

Kramer shared his story during a special Shabbat dinner at Temple B’nai Shalom in Fairfax Station to honor veterans and their families. Shabbat is the day of the rest in the Jewish faith that lasts from sundown to sundown on the seventh day of the week.

**AT THE DINNER**, which included breaking of traditional challah bread, lighting Shabbat candles and catered food from longtime Temple B’nai Shalom partner Spartans Family Restaurant in Burke, several military veterans shared anecdotes about their time in the service.

“We have a lifetime of stories in our congregation,” said Senior Rabbi Amy Perlin, “of Jewish communities in the services with the connection of a uniform and a religion.”

Jim Sturim is a retired colonel in the U.S. Air Force, where he did a lot of test-flying and acquisition while serving. He helped organize the evening’s events on Nov. 13, which included three mini-sermons by veterans from the congregation during the Shabbat service following dinner.

“Tonight, veterans will have a bigger part,” Sturim said. “They’ll give a glimpse of what life was like for those Jews in the service.”

Stephanie Leung of Fairfax served 26 years in the U.S. Navy, including posts in Bahrain, Israel and Kenya. “Sometimes you have to really put behind your identity,” she said.

Other speakers described finding support in practicing their religion from military chaplains, as well as more welcoming locals in Scotland and Italy.

For Bev Seiden, a retired Commander in the U.S. Navy, the service was where she found her identity. During her mini-sermon, Seiden described growing up Roman Catholic and then drifting away from the Church. As a nurse in the Navy, she met the man who would become her husband and decided to fully embrace his faith as her own: Judaism.

“I felt I was joining a long line of people,” Seiden said about completing her conversion and becoming a bat mitzvah, or full-fledged adult female member of the Jewish community. “It was like being encircled in a warm hug.”

Seiden spoke to the congregation from a lectern in the temple’s sanctuary. Behind her several sacred Torah scrolls are housed in a compartment behind heavy wooden doors. A special binder for the scrolls includes material from uniforms of different U.S. military branches, representing a deep bond between the congregation and the armed forces.

**B’NAI SHALOM MEMBER** Suzanne Lederer’s father once held services with one of the same sets of scrolls while working for the U.S. government in Panama. Years later, the temple coincidentally acquired the scrolls, which Lederer’s children then used in their mitzvah services transitioning to adulthood.

“There’s a thread running from my father to his grandchildren through this Torah of ours,” Lederer said. “It’s a wonderful connection.”

As the service concluded, Rabbi Perlin gave a final message of remembrance and thanks for veterans and their sacrifice.

“We’re always aware there were times when we were not free to pray,” she said. “Now we pray in freedom together.”

Temple B’nai Shalom is located at 7612 Old Ox Road in Fairfax Station. For more information visit [www.tbs-online.org](http://www.tbs-online.org).



**Spouses of active duty and retired military, including Caroline Kramer (center) of Springfield, light Shabbat dinner candles at Temple B’nai Shalom in Fairfax Station.**

**Temple B’nai Shalom Senior Rabbi Amy Perlin welcomes military families to a special Shabbat dinner before evening services.**



**Temple B’nai Shalom member Jim Sturim of Burke is a retired lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force. Sturim helped organize a special Shabbat dinner and service to recognize the veterans in the temple community.**

PHOTOS BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION



**Lt. Col. Jacob Kramer of Springfield talks about the challenges of living as a Jewish family while stationed with the U.S. Army in Morocco.**



**The display case at Temple B’nai Shalom in Fairfax Station shows off memorabilia of past and current members of the congregation who have served in the U.S. military.**





— REAL STORIES FROM THE EXPRESS LANES —

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See more real stories from the Lanes at [ExpressLanes.com](http://ExpressLanes.com)



Jennifer's story was one of our winning entries in our "Express Lanes Love Story" promotion.



# Fairfax County Updates Teacher Safety Training In Wake of Woodson Fire

Science teachers across Fairfax County Public Schools have begun mandatory updated safety training in the wake of an Oct. 30 fire at Woodson High School that injured five students and a teacher, and caused \$7,500 in damage.

The fire started in a sophomore chemistry class during an experiment that involved an open flame.

Superintendent Dr. Karen Garza immediately banned all science experiments with open flames, but the ban is scheduled to be lifted once all teachers have completed their training. School system spokesperson John Torre said the updated training for high school teachers is expected to be finished by the end of November.

Torre also said Fairfax County Public Schools is conducting its own internal review of the incident, as well as responding to in-



Woodson High School.

quiries from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and Fire Marshall. While those investigations continue, the school system will not release any more

information on the incident.

Shawna Lawhorne, a representative from the U.S. Chemical Safety Board, said her organization is not investigating the

Woodson accident, but has “gathered facts about the incident to better understand the scope and severity of the problem.”

One year before the Woodson incident, Oct. 30, 2014, the Safety Board released a safety bulletin titled “Key Lessons for Preventing Incidents from Flammable Chemicals in Educational Demonstrations.”

Lawhorne said the bulletin brings together their findings from three accidents that occurred in 2014 where students were burned during experiments similar to the one that was taking place at Woodson.

“We will continue to gather data on these kinds of incidents and aggressively advocate for adoption of the key lessons learned during our previous investigation into this hazard,” Lawhorne said in an email.

—TIM PETERSON

## AREA ROUNDUPS

### Man Shot in Lorton Home

Police responded to a report of a person shot at a home in the 9200 block of Forest Greens Drive in Lorton shortly before 3 a.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 17.

A 20-year-old man, who lived in the home, suffered a life-threatening gunshot wound to the upper body and was flown by Fairfax 1 to Inova Fairfax Hospital.

Detectives are investigating the cause and circumstances surrounding the shooting.

Officers arrived at the home and found that there had been a small party taking place. There were three women and another man in the home. The shooter was quickly identified as a 47-year-old Lorton man, who was acquainted with the victim. He was held in custody.

Charges are pending further investigation. All people in the home were known to each other and officers believe the situation stemmed from a dispute and was contained within the residence.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Crime Solvers electronically by visiting [www.fairfaxcrimesolvers.org](http://www.fairfaxcrimesolvers.org) or text-a-tip by texting “TIP187” plus your message to CRIMES(274637)\*\* or by calling 1-866-411-TIPS(8477), or call Fairfax County Police at 703-691-2131.

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## News

### Athletic Fields Named for Local Sports Icons

Clifton resident Jeff Stein was among three local sports icons recognized Nov. 7 with athletic fields being named after them. Stein's name now marks Soccer Field #3 at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park in Chantilly.

Stein has spent 14 years on the Fairfax County Athletic Council and was president of the Fairfax County Soccer Council between 1998 and 2003, according to a Fairfax County release. He's currently vice president of the Southwestern Youth Association, with whom he was Soccer Commissioner between 1994 and 2014. Stein has been a soccer coach for more than 20 years, as well as a referee, and is responsible for creating the Fairfax Over 50 Soccer League. At the same park, Field #6 was named in honor of former Southwestern Youth Association president Gary Flather, who served for more than 20 years.

Youth sports advocate, coach and current Chantilly Youth Association president Ralph Wills was honored with Rectangular Field



PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHELLE STEIN

Fairfax County named Soccer Field #4 at Ellanor C Lawrence Park in Chantilly after Clifton resident Jeff Stein (left).

#1 at Sully Highlands Park in Herndon being named after him.

Ellanor C. Lawrence Park is located at 5040 Walney Road in

Chantilly. Sully Highlands Park is located at 13808 Wall Road in Herndon.

—TIM PETERSON

### Fairfax Station Teen Named Cadet NCO of the Month

Fishburne Military School in Waynesboro, Va. announced that Cadet Sergeant Timothy Arndt, of Fairfax Station, was officially named Fishburne Military School's Cadet Non-Commissioned Officer of the Month for October. Arndt is a junior and the son of Mr. and Mrs. David Arndt. Cadet Arndt is a squad leader for Band Company, is on the Distinguished Honor Roll, and plays football and baseball.

The school's superintendent,

Col. Gary R. Morrison noted, "Cadet Arndt has excelled during his time at Fishburne. His efforts serve as an example to his peers, and his success represents the best of our school. Congratulations to Mr. Arndt for a job well done."

**Timothy Arndt, of Fairfax Station, was officially named Fishburne Military School's Cadet Non-Commissioned Officer of the Month for October.**



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

## AREA ROUNDUPS

### Click It or Ticket Starts this Week

This Thursday, Nov. 19, Fairfax County Police will be joining other state and local law enforcement officers to help save more lives by strongly enforcing seat belt laws. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Association (NHTSA), one in five Americans fails to regularly wear a seatbelt when driving a motor vehicle.

Need a tougher reminder? Read the following statistics and keep yourself safe. Be home for your family this holiday season. Buckle up!

❖ In 2013, a total of 21,132 passenger vehicle occupants were killed in crashes, and almost half (49 percent) of them were NOT wearing their seat belts at the time of the crash.

❖ Approximately 64 percent of the passenger vehicle occupants killed in nighttime crashes in 2013 were NOT wearing their seat belts, compared to 48 percent during daytime hours.

❖ Among passenger vehicle occupant fatalities in 2013, the age group 21 to 24 had the highest percentage of occupants killed that were unre-

strained: 2,415 fatalities, of which 1,340 (55 percent) were not wearing seat belts.

❖ Seat belts saved approximately 12,584 lives nationwide in 2013. If everyone had worn seat belts that year, an additional 2,800 lives could have been saved.

❖ Proper seat belt use reduces the risk of fatal injury to front seat passengers by 45 percent and the risk of moderate to serious injury by 50 percent.

❖ Ejection from a vehicle is one of the most dangerous events that can happen to a person in a crash.

In fatal crashes in 2013, 79 percent of the passenger vehicle occupants who were totally ejected from vehicles were killed. Seatbelts are effective in preventing total ejections; only one percent of the occupants reported to have been using restraints were totally ejected.

For more information, please visit NHTSA's Thanksgiving Holiday Campaign.

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## PEOPLE

# Local Author Releases Memoir

**W**estbow Press has released Tracey Casciano's new book, "Out of the Darkness, Into the Light: A Story of Faith and Forgiveness After Child Abuse."

The book is an inspiring and encouraging story. In this honest and raw memoir, Casciano shares her experiences of an abusive childhood and damaged relationships. Amidst the difficulties, people and circumstances are placed in her path which lead her on a faith journey towards belief in Christ, forgiveness, hope and grace. It is an inspiration for anyone with inner doubts and struggles, which is all of us.

The book is available for purchase online on Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

Casciano has a background in education and was a history teacher for eight years in FCPS, where she was also the sponsor for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. At her church, Casciano is the executive assistant to the pastor and volunteers as a leader for the youth group. She has been on two mission trips to Guatemala. She lives in Lorton with her husband and four



COURTESY PHOTO

**Tracey Casciano.**

sons.

Tracey blogs at <http://ephesians2v8.wordpress.com>.





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## NEWS

# RunFit Kidz Promotes 'Healthy, Active Lifestyle'

**Celebration 5K race on Nov. 22 at Burke Lake Park.**

BY ARISA ISHITA  
THE CONNECTION

"Nice job guys." "Don't forget to tie your shoe buddy, you don't wanna trip and fall over it."

Backyard track at Sangster Elementary School was still filled with energy after school despite the chilly weather.

Students from second to the sixth grade—approximately 50 kids—divided into two groups to begin warm-ups to get ready for their running practice of the day.

They are the members of the RunFit Kidz Program. The program teaches young students of all fitness levels about proper running mechanics and importance of nutrition and hydration, as well as posture, speed work and reaction time.

Corky Sturtevant is the founder of RunFit Kidz and one of the coaches in the program. For her, it is not simply about having her students run or having them become good at running. What is more fascinating about the program is that her passion of fitness and living in a healthy lifestyle allows her students to learn beyond running itself.

"I want to give them some knowledge that living in a healthy, active lifestyle is so important," she said. "I want, as an adult, to give these kids an opportunity. We can be proactive instead of reactive on teaching healthy living."

**EVERY WEEK**, seventy-five-minute practice incorporates interesting, creative menus into their training schedules.

What follows after warm-ups are discussions on healthy habits where coaches talk about different health topics, such as hydration, sugar and what a healthy plate looks like, and have their students learn about them. Students also do some activities and games.

Likewise, in what they call "muscle groups," the students learn about roles of different muscles. For example, they learn about quads and hamstrings this week and then feet and ankles the following week.

After the discussions of the day, the second half of the practice is spent doing the actual run and cool-downs. Sturtevant believes each student is different, so each



PHOTOS BY ARISA ISHITA/THE CONNECTION

**Students from the second to sixth grades run together, challenging their 'personal goals' of the day. Cheerful young students persevere despite the chilly temperature.**

**Corky Sturtevant, founder of RunFit Kidz and her sons - Jake (left) in third grade and Luke (right) in fifth grade - who attend the after school program practice together. Three of them wearing the RunFit Kidz T-shirts shows their spirits.**



of them can create their personal goal. In fact, what they call 'goal run' is a great opportunity for the students to challenge themselves.

"We call it 'goal run' because we give a certain amount of time and you do what you can in that amount of time," Sturtevant said. "A personal goal – it's not about being the fastest or doing the most laps, it's about your personal goal: 'what can I achieve today?'"

RunFit Kidz is an eight-week program which takes place every fall and spring seasons. This is their ninth season, according to Sturtevant, and this season over 500 students are registered in the program for a total of 23 teams in Virginia. Each team holds either after school or morning training. The team at Sangster Elementary has practice every Wednesday.

**THE PROGRAM** has 17 coaches who are all national-certified fitness professionals. Most of them have numerous certifications and Sturtevant believes it is important that they are knowledgeable themselves about fitness in order to be able to educate their students.

Almost reaching the eighth week, the RunFit Kidz fall season is about to end. To conclude the season, students from all of the 23 teams get together and run in the Celebration 5K race on Sunday, Nov. 22 at Burke Lake Park. While not every student is required to attend the event, Sturtevant looks forward to seeing her students accomplish their "personal goals." "I'm always so excited," she said. "For us, it's a non-competitive event so it's not about who's gonna finish first. It's just about all of these kids coming together as one and accomplishing the goal they've set for themselves eight weeks... It's such a huge accomplishment. It just goes to show if you put your mind in something, you can do it. They're always impressed with themselves. I'm always impressed with them."

The RunFit Kidz 10th season will start right after spring break in March next year and they are also excited about their first RunFit Kidz Camp planned for the summer. For more information about the RunFit Kidz Program, visit <http://www.runfitkidz.com>.



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## NEWS

# Local Student Receives National Science Honor

## Alexandria teenager awarded scholarship for sonar research.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

When Michael You was 3 years old, he would flip through the pages of science picture books. He was particularly drawn to those with illustrations or photographs of ocean animals.

"I've always liked oceans and sea life and I enjoyed visiting the Baltimore and Washington Aquariums," said You, now a senior at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology and Hayfield Secondary School, both in Alexandria, Virginia.

That fascination, boosted by months of research and preparation, manifested itself recently when You became a regional finalist in the 2015 Siemens Foundation STEM Competition, which promotes science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education. The competition supports and honors students who push their academic boundaries beyond the classroom and engage in hands-on research projects. You won a \$1,000 college scholarship for his efforts.

You researched SONAR (SOUND Navigation And Ranging)-related whale beachings and how bubbles in the blood vessels of whales can cause injuries when whales are exposed to SONAR. A television documentary about endangered ocean animals inspired the project. "It was interesting because I didn't understand how it could be because I couldn't find a connection between SONAR and whale strandings."

You realized that SONAR-related whale beachings were a legitimate, growing problem. "But no one was really paying attention to it or researching it," he said.

He developed a mathematical model to test the effects of high-energy sound sources on bubble oscillation in small tubes. In announcing You's award, David Etzwiler, CEO of the Siemens Foundation, said the project has the ability to "advance research and exploration in critical fields."

One might say that scientific research is in You's blood: His father, Liangzhi You, is a senior scientist at the International Food Policy Research Institute and his mother, Xuemei Chen, is a patent examiner at the United States Patent and



PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL YOU

**Michael You was a regional finalist in the 2015 Siemens Foundation STEM Competition. He researched SONAR (SOUND Navigation And Ranging)-related whale beachings.**

Trademark Office.

In fact, his mother served as his mentor for the Siemens research project. "My mom has done research on bubbles in oscillation," he said. "She helped me understand bubble mechanics."

Chen says that her son has always been interested in science and technology. "He really deserved this honor," she said. "He's a very motivated kid. When he decides to do something, he makes up his mind and he manages to finish it."

You hopes his project can help individuals become more aware of human impacts on the ocean and galvanize people to protect vital marine ecosystems.

"I have concerns about whales becoming extinct," he said. "Military sonar could be part of the problem."

In his spare time, You is a competitive swimmer and plays the violin and piano. You also teaches competition math at his local Chinese School on Sundays, focusing on number theory, combinatorics, algebra and geometry.

"My schedule is pretty packed," he said. "When I'm doing something, I try to do it as fast as possible and by focusing on one thing, I can do it quickly. Then I feel accomplished and you can move on. I enjoy doing everything I do."

You, who has a 4.5 weighted grade point average, recently finished applying to two colleges. He hopes to study electrical engineering.

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# OPINION

## Holidays Are About Giving

Give thanks and share locally; tens of thousands of families around us are in need.

The holidays are about giving, and giving thanks. The holidays are about children and family. The holidays are about sharing, about joy. The holidays are about being thankful and about faith and appreciation. The holidays are about alleviating suffering for others.

Northern Virginia is among the wealthiest areas in the country, and many if not most of us go through our usual routines without encountering evidence of needy families among us.

### Where to Give Locally

- ❖ **FACETS** helps parents, their children and individuals who suffer the effects of poverty in the Fairfax area, a partner in efforts to end homelessness in Fairfax County. FACETS is always in need of volunteers, and offers a variety of one-time and ongoing opportunities. 703-865-4251 or volunteer@facetscares.org. www.facetscares.org. 10640 Page Avenue, Suite 300, Fairfax, VA 22030.
- ❖ **Our Daily Bread** in Fairfax expects to have 3,000 individuals and families on their list for the Holiday Program which helps those in need with food for the holidays and gifts for children. For more information on their holiday programs, including how to sponsor a family, go to www.odbfairfax.com/holiday.
- ❖ **Fairfax City Area FISH (For Immediate Sympathetic Help)**, helps local people who are in temporary need of life's basic necessities such as food, clothing, and financial assistance for rent, mortgage payments, utilities, and medical treatments. FISH also provides limited transportation for doctor appointments and food delivery. 703-222-0880. http://fairfaxfish.org/.
- ❖ **Lamb Center**, www.thelambcenter.org, Day center for homeless, Fairfax. 703-691-3178.
- ❖ **Food for Others** distributed more than 2.4 million pounds of free food to families in need in Northern Virginia in the year ending June 30, 2012. The nonprofit provides a safety net for people who suddenly face unforeseen emergencies such as a

But more than 51,000 children who attend Fairfax County Public Schools are poor enough to receive free or subsidized meals, a significant measure of poverty. That's 28 percent of students in Fairfax County Public Schools.

### EDITORIAL

In Arlington more than 31 percent of the students are poor enough to receive free or subsidized meals; that's 7,749 students at last count.

In Alexandria, 8,664 students are poor enough to receive free or subsidized meals. That's 59 percent of the 14,671 students enrolled.

family illness or the loss of a job or a spouse. Located at 2938 Prosperity Ave., Fairfax, VA 22031. 703-207-9173. www.foodforothers.com

- ❖ **Ecumenical Community Helping Others (ECHO)**, 703-569-9160. Open to receive donations at 7205 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. Provides food and financial assistance to those in short-term emergencies, and provides clothing and household goods to low income families, helping more than 5,000 people last year. www.echo-inc.org.
- ❖ **Lorton Community Action Center** operates the Act II Thrift Shop at 9506 Richmond Highway, Lorton. Sales from the shop generate funds for LCAC and clients also shop there. Now collecting gift cards and food baskets for Thanksgiving, gifts and food baskets for Christmas, and warm coats. 703-339-8611. www.lortonaction.org.
- ❖ **12 Ways of Giving:** Fairfax County Office of Public Private Partnerships "12 Ways of Giving" campaign is an annual event that showcases many ways for meaningful, local giving during the holiday season, highlighting nonprofits in Fairfax County. www.fairfaxcountypartnerships.org.
- ❖ **Assistance League of Northern Virginia** is an all-volunteer organization that clothes, feeds, educates and nurtures those in need focusing five of the neediest elementary schools. Volunteers and donors are always needed. Contact ALNorthernVA@yahoo.com or see www.northernvirginia.assistanceleague.org.
- ❖ **Comfort for America's Uniformed Services**

These are children who are living in families who may be on the brink of homelessness, families who must choose between medical bills, car repair, heat and food. These are children who may not be sure that they will have a meal between the meals they get in school. School holidays can bring uncertainty and hunger, a far cry from the celebrations, gifts and plenty that we associate with Thanksgiving and Christmas. Hundreds of homeless students attend the public schools, and their needs are greater.

There are literally hundreds, probably thousands, of ways to give locally this season. Here are a few ideas. We will rerun this list again during the holiday, so let us know what we have missed.

— MARY KIMM,

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

**(CAUSE)** ensures that recuperating service members have opportunities for recreation and social interaction and receive concrete signs of appreciation for all that they have done. 4114 Legato Road Suite B, Fairfax, VA 22033. 703-591-4968. cause-usa.org

- ❖ **National Capital Food Bank**, 6833 Hill Park Drive, Lorton, serving all of Northern Virginia. 703-541-3063. www.capitalareafoodbank.org.
- ❖ **Homestretch** is the largest provider of transitional housing in Fairfax County and offers a services to help the homeless better their lives through education. Email: jhenderson@homestretchva.org. 703-237-2035 x125. http://homestretchva.org/volunteer/.
- ❖ **Pathway Homes** focuses on providing housing and support services to individuals with serious mental illnesses, with the mission to help these individuals reach their full potential and lead stable lives. They offer both in-home programs, semi-independent houses and assisted living facilities. 10201 Fairfax Boulevard, Suite 200, Fairfax, VA 22030. 703-876-0390. info@pathwayhomes.org. http://www.pathwayhomes.org. http://www.pathwayhomes.org/support-pathway/.
- ❖ **Shelter House** provides crisis intervention, safe housing and supportive services to promote self-sufficiency for homeless families and victims of domestic violence in Fairfax County. http://www.shelterhouse.org/get-involved/.

## More Support Needed for Runaway, Homeless Youth

BY JUDITH DITTMAN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
ALTERNATIVE HOUSE



November is National Runaway Prevention Month and The National Runaway Safeline estimates are that nationally 1.3 to 1.7 million runaway, thrown away and homeless youth live on the street. Fairfax, even with its excellent schools and supports for young people, is not immune from this problem. Alternative House, a Fairfax nonprofit organization, provides emergency shelter and counseling to more than 150 young people each year. The Fairfax County Public Schools homeless liaison's office reports that there were 324 homeless youth under the age of 18 who didn't have the support of a par-

### About Alternative House

The Alternative House, a Northern Virginia nonprofit organization, provides emergency shelter, transitional living programs and community based supports for homeless, runaway, abused and at-risk young people. Alternative House has provided services for young people for more than 43 years.

ent or guardian during the last school year.

Why do young people run away or become homeless? They run for many different reasons. Sometimes young people are experiencing "typical" teenage behavior. They get mad at their family and leave home usually going to a friend's house. But even this can be dangerous. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimates that one in six endangered runaways is a victim of sex trafficking. It's unfortunately too easy for even a suburban teen to be sucked into this horror when

they've left home.

Many young people are fleeing family conflict or an abusive situation. According to the National Runaway Safeline, 47 percent report conflict in their home, 80 percent of runaway girls report being physically or sexually abused and 43 percent of runaways have experienced physical abuse. These are young people who believe the street is safer than home and more than 50 percent of youth who are on the streets are there because their parents told them to leave or didn't care if they left.

Once they have left home young

people are at higher risk to become victims of sex trafficking, and assault. Young people are simply not prepared to fend for themselves. It's not surprising that mental health issues increase significantly with 32 percent of runaway and homeless teens reporting having attempted suicide.

Unfortunately, there are few resources for these young people. Here in Fairfax we have Alternative House. It is the only emergency shelter for teenagers in Northern Virginia. There is only one other shelter like it in the entire state of Virginia and that one is far away in Virginia Beach. In the past 15 years four other Northern Virginia emergency shelters for teenagers have closed. Fairfax

SEE ALTERNATIVE HOUSE,  
PAGE 11

Fairfax Station,  
Lorton & Clifton  
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www.ConnectionNewspapers.com

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**NEWS DEPARTMENT:**  
burke@connectionnewspapers.com

**Kemal Kurspahic**  
Editor ♦ 703-778-9414  
kemal@connectionnewspapers.com

**Amna Rehmatulla**  
Editorial Assistant  
703-778-9410 ext.427  
arehmatulla@connectionnewspapers.com

**Tim Peterson**  
Community Reporter  
703-314-0789  
tpeterson@connectionnewspapers.com

**Jon Roetman**  
Sports Editor ♦ 703-752-4013  
jroetman@connectionnewspapers.com  
@jonroetman

**ADVERTISING:**  
For advertising information  
**e-mail:**  
sales@connectionnewspapers.com  
703-778-9431

**Steve Hogan**  
Display Advertising, 703-778-9418  
shogan@connectionnewspapers.com

**Andrea Smith**  
Classified Advertising, 703-778-9411  
classified@connectionnewspapers.com

**Debbie Funk**  
National Sales  
703-778-9444  
debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

**David Griffin**  
Marketing Assistant  
703-778-9431  
dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com

**Editor & Publisher**  
Mary Kimm  
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com  
@MaryKimm

**Executive Vice President**  
Jerry Vernon  
jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

**Editor in Chief**  
Steven Mauren  
**Managing Editor**  
Kemal Kurspahic  
**Photography:**  
Deb Cobb, Craig Sterbutzel  
**Art/Design:**  
Laurence Foong, John Heinly  
**Production Manager:**  
Geovani Flores

**Special Assistant to the Publisher**  
Jeanne Theismann  
jtheismann@connectionnewspapers.com  
@TheismannMedia

**CIRCULATION: 703-778-9426**  
**Circulation Manager:**  
Ann Oliver  
circulation@connectionnewspapers.com





# LETTERS

## Del. Hugo's Thank-you

To the Editor:

Thank you so much to the many volunteers, family, constituents, and friends who worked on our campaign. We won with over 65 percent of the vote.

And, a very special note of gratitude to the thousands who voted: No matter who you voted for on Election Day, I will strive to represent each of you to the best of my abilities.

And, lastly, I want to thank my opponent. With regard to leading Virginia, Jerry Foltz and I have a different vision. But, I do believe that he seeks what he believes would be best for our Commonwealth. I wish him and his wife Alice my best.

Again, thank you for the honor of representing you in Richmond.

**Del. Tim Hugo**  
(R-40)

## Worrying School Budget Cuts

To the Editor:

I am writing in response to an article published in the last week's Connection ("Garza Presents Budget Task Force Report to School Board.") I am concerned with the future of Fairfax County Public Schools' education system. The Fairfax County Public School board's main priority should be ensuring that the kids of Fairfax County receive the best education possible. With Superintendent Garza's proposed budget cuts, this will not be possible. Proposed ideas such as increasing class sizes and eliminating foreign language immersion programs not only hurt

the student's education but also negatively affect their future in this era of globalization. Math and literacy rates in the U.S are significantly lower compared to many other countries, and cutting important educational programs ensures that we continue to fall behind.

Increasing student fees and cutting certain programs serves solely as a temporary fix for the county's budget problems. We need to move discussion away from program cutting and towards ways to increase revenue. Property taxes are the number one contributor to schools' funding. If property taxes are increased, even by a small

amount, schools will benefit. We cannot continue to cut our way through the financial issues that our county faces.

I may no longer be a student of Fairfax County, but I still have siblings and friends in the school system. Their futures are very important to me, and I want to make sure they receive the best possible education. It is vital that we save and maintain the quality of Fairfax County Public Schools.

**Rachael Talento**

Fairfax  
Sophomore at James Madison University.

## Alternative House

FROM PAGE 10

needs more housing and supports for our runaway and homeless young people.

In addition to working to provide more safe shelters for those youth who have runaway or are homeless, there are things we can do as individuals and as a community to provide the support young people need to stay safe. Additional counseling resources can help families learn to better communicate. Since family conflict is

one of the primary reasons young people leave home this can have a huge impact. Studies also show that increased mental health supports and substance abuse treatment options for both youth and families help prevent runaway episodes.

Our young people deserve to have caring adults and a safe place to stay so they can grow to their full potential. If we can create this, we can prevent the tragedy that faces young people who run away and become homeless.

### FAITH NOTES

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

Clifton Presbyterian Church is offering a **Grief Support Group**. Offered for eight sessions on Thursdays from Dec. 3-Feb. 3 from 10:30 a.m.-noon for those who have experienced a recent death and loss in their lives. This group will offer a safe and supportive place for participants to explore ways to walk the

journey of grief and to "wrestle" with difficult, and sometimes unanswerable, questions. Dec. 3, 10, 17; Jan. 7, 12, 21, 28; Feb. 3. Clifton Presbyterian Church is located at 12748 Richards Lane, Clifton. office@cliftonpc.org. 703-830-3175.

The Paschal Lamb will hold a **Book Reading of "Blessed are You"** from noon to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 5. The Paschal Lamb is located at 11214 Lee Highway, Fairfax. Author Melanie Rigney will read from her new book. Free. 703-863-3940.

**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.

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## HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT & GIFT GUIDE

# Creating a New Holiday Tradition

**“A Fairfax Nutcracker” presented by Fairfax Symphony Orchestra and Fairfax Ballet Company.**

BY DAVID SIEGEL  
THE CONNECTION

**T**wo venerable Fairfax County performing arts institutions are joining forces for a singular holiday season experience for the whole family. Long-standing local performing arts organizations, the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra (FSO) and the Fairfax Ballet Company, have re-envisioned and created “A Fairfax Nutcracker” to be performed at the Center for Arts.

The wintertime wonders of “A Fairfax Nutcracker” will have the memorable Tchaikovsky score performed live by the FSO under the baton of the classically trained Luke Frazier, FSO Principal Pops Conductor. Frazier is noted for conducting a number of FSO programs of his own creation as well founding and conducting the American Pops Orchestra with Great American Songbook performances at D.C.’s Lisner Auditorium.

Serving as “A Fairfax Nutcracker” production artistic director is Joseph J. Simeone, who will also dance the key role of the Nutcracker Prince. Simeone has danced with the American Ballet Theater, appeared on Broadway and recently at the Kennedy Center on “Little Dancer.”

Fairfax Ballet Company member Kellyn



Fairfax Ballet Company dancers in rehearsal for “A Fairfax Nutcracker.”

McNulty will dance the major role of Clara, the young girl who dreams of magical moments on Christmas Eve. The enchantment and mischief that Clara witnesses and joins includes a brave Nutcracker Prince coming to life, whimsical and exquisite characters such as Mother Ginger and the Sugar Plum Fairy along with a multitude of dancing angels, a ballerina doll, sugar plum fairies and witnessing a fantastical epic battle between heroic toy soldiers and mischievous mice. Dancing with McNulty and Simeone will be artistic staff and students from Fairfax Ballet and experienced professional dancers.

According to Karla Petry, executive director, Fairfax Ballet, “A Fairfax Nutcracker” gives students “a priceless opportunity to perform in a full production with professional dancers, with a major classical or-

chestra on a large stage.” Frazier, Petry and Simone agreed that “partnering together with other local arts organizations helps to promote youth involvement and greater arts awareness.”

Inviting audiences to “A Fairfax Nutcracker,” Simeone noted that “our Nutcracker offers everything that is exciting about an evening of live theater.” For Frazier, this is a great “opportunity for audiences to have a grand experience and to introduce new audiences to all that the performing arts offers in an inclusive and accessible production.”

What better way to kick-off these festive times of holiday cheer, than by experiencing a new holiday classic with the FSO and the Fairfax Ballet, partnering to create a wondrous evening of entertainment to cherish.

**Luke Frazier, Fairfax Symphony Orchestra, Principal Pops Conductor.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF LUKE FRAZIER



**Joseph J. Simeone, “A Fairfax Nutcracker” production artistic director and Nutcracker Prince.**

PHOTO BY STEFANIE BROWN



**Kellyn McNulty, performing as Clara in “A Fairfax Nutcracker.”**

PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX BALLET COMPANY



## Where and When

“A Fairfax Nutcracker” presented by Fairfax Symphony Orchestra and Fairfax Ballet Company at the George Mason University Center for the Arts Concert Hall, 4400 University Ave, Fairfax. Performance, Dec. 5, 2015 at 8 p.m. Tickets: \$34-\$58. Call 888-945-2468 or visit <http://cfa.gmu.edu>

## Robinson Theater Presents “Noises Off”

**T**he Rambunctious Theater Company – in partnership with the Robinson Secondary Drama Department – presents Michael Frayn’s “Noises Off” on Nov. 19-21 at Robinson’s Russell Theater.

Showtimes are 7 p.m. with an additional 2 p.m. matinee on the 21st. The satirical presentation is directed by Robinson’s Megan Thrift and features an outstanding team of high school actors and technical crews as they bring this comedy to life.

“Noises Off” is a three-act play that tells a story within a story. The show takes its name from the theatrical direction for sounds heard off-stage. The playwright realized what he was seeing occurring behind the stage was funnier than the actual show on stage.

The premise is that director Lloyd Dallas was hired to helm an Americanized take on a British play and does his best to control an eccentric group of stage

actors. During practice sessions, things run smoothly.

However, when Lloyd and his actors begin a series of performances leading up to a Broadway premiere, chaos ensues. Star actress Doty is quickly passing her prime, male lead Frederick has no confidence and bit actor Selsdon is rarely sober.

The Cappies award-winning Rambunctious Theatre Company Boosters is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Comprised of community members and the parents of Robinson Secondary School Drama students, the boosters support and help facilitate the school’s various events and productions. The boosters host summer drama camps for younger actors and provide scholarships to Robinson students pursuing theatre arts in college. Tickets and additional details are available at [robinsondrama.org](http://robinsondrama.org).

“Noises Off” runs Nov. 19-21 at 7 p.m.; Nov. 21 also at 2 p.m. Robinson Secondary School, 5035 Sideburn Rd in Fairfax. Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$10 for students.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RAMBUNCTIOUS THEATER COMPANY

**Robinson Secondary School actors present Michael Frayn’s comedy “Noises Off.” Top row, from left: Madyson Hanton, Daniel Williams, Julia Mahon Kuzin, Matthew Ross, Hanna Kornell, RJ Pratt; bottom row, from left: Colin Diggs, Alex Lane, Matthew Cook.**



# HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT & GIFT GUIDE



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

**Operation Lifesaver Santa Trains arrives at Burke Centre Station on Saturday, Dec. 12. Ride the train with Santa. Don't forget to bring a toy for Toys for Tots. Get tickets at [vrespecialevents.org](http://vrespecialevents.org) starting Monday, Nov. 23.**

FROM PAGE 13

an outfit you would wear to a Christmas party - whether new or second hand - for under \$25, we want to see it. Bargain hunters and creative crafters, put on your tennis shoes or your crafting apron to find us something exciting for our show. \$20. Reserve by Monday, Dec. 7. [SpringWmConn@yahoo.com](mailto:SpringWmConn@yahoo.com). 703-922-6438.

## SATURDAY/DEC. 12

**Holiday and Petition Party.** 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Irving Middle School, 8100 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. Begin with the line dance class with Cathy Byon followed by performances by outstanding senior dance teams, accompanied by potluck delicacies, including kim-chi and lumpia. We will discuss petition for annex to Pohick Regional Library. Family and Friends are welcome to join our celebration. [corazonfoley@yahoo.com](mailto:corazonfoley@yahoo.com).

**Operation Lifesaver Santa Trains.** Burke Centre Station, 10399 Premier Court, Burke. Ride the train with Santa but don't forget to bring a toy. Burke Centre will become a drop off site for the Marine Corps Toys for Tots campaigns. Tickets go on sale Monday, Nov. 23. \$5-\$6. [http://www.vrespecialevents.org/Seasonal\\_Santa\\_Trains/](http://www.vrespecialevents.org/Seasonal_Santa_Trains/).

**Breakfast with St. Nick.** 8 a.m.-noon. Burke Presbyterian Church, 5690 Oak Leather Drive, Burke. Children and families gather to hear the story of Saint Nicholas, the saint who captured the spirit of giving and began the Santa Claus tradition. The morning includes special time with St. Nick (to include photos), a visit to the "Little Shoppe" where children can do Christmas shopping for family members, Christmas crafts, and a light breakfast and carol singing. All are welcome. <http://www.burkepreschurch.org/saint-nick>.

## SUNDAY/DEC. 13

**First Holiday Half at Burke Lake Park.** 9 a.m. Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Runners can expect a premium experience starting with pre-race entertainment, a winter and holiday themed decorated course, scoring and awards, and an incredible post-race celebration including the awards ceremony, post-race breakfast buffet, and vendor expo. <http://www.metrorunwalkspringfield.com/holiday-half-home>.

## SATURDAY/DEC. 19

**VFW Post 7327 Thanksgiving and Christmas Adopt-a-Military-Family Party.** Noon-4 p.m. Greater Springfield Volunteer Fire Department, 7011 Backlick Road, Springfield. Each year, the Post and Auxiliary provide food for the families at the Thanksgiving and Christmas Holiday. At Thanksgiving they receive a "wish list" from the children and provide those gifts for the parents to put under the tree on Christmas day. Finally, they hold a Christmas party that includes food for the entire family, a visit from Santa Claus, crafts, entertainment, and music. Call 703-732-6596 for more information.

## Shop

### THURSDAY/NOV. 19

**Pohick Christmas Mart.** 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Pohick Church, 9301 Richmond Highway, Lorton. The Parish House and the Vestry House will be transformed into a festive Christmas atmosphere with rooms filled with Arts and Crafts, a Consignment Shop, and a Pantry Shelf with fresh baked goods, homemade apple butter, and frozen casseroles. The Docent Guild will be leading tours of our historic church, and a delicious luncheon will be served by ladies dressed in colonial costumes. [www.pohick.org](http://www.pohick.org). 703-339-6572.

### SATURDAY-SUNDAY/NOV. 21-22

**City of Fairfax Holiday Craft Show.** Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Fairfax High School, 3501 Rebel Run, Fairfax. Over 200 juried crafters and gourmet food vendors. \$5, \$8, free for under 18. Free shuttle bus. [www.fairfaxholidayshow.com](http://www.fairfaxholidayshow.com). 703-385-7858.

### THURSDAY-SUNDAY/DEC. 3-6

**Library Holiday Book Sale.** Dec. 3, 3-9 p.m. Dec. 4-5, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Dec. 6, noon-2 p.m. Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce St., Springfield. Come and find those perfect books, CDs and DVDs for your holiday shopping. Whether it's a cute little book to put a gift card in, a craft/hobby book for your favorite aunt or that special gift for mom, dad or the little ones--there are offerings galore waiting for you. Purchases will help fund valuable library children's programs. Bag sale on Sunday. For more information, please contact [rbfriends@gmail.com](mailto:rbfriends@gmail.com) or 703-451-8055. TTY 703-324-8365.

### SATURDAY/DEC. 5

**Art Guild of Clifton Holiday Show.** 2-7 p.m. Clifton Presbyterian Church, 12748 Richards Lane, Clifton. A feature of this year's show will be instruction and craft demos for youth visitors. They will be able to use a variety of papers and stamping to create Holiday cards and gift accessories suitable for their gift giving. [www.artguildofclifton.org](http://www.artguildofclifton.org).

### SATURDAY-SUNDAY/DEC. 5-6

**38th Annual Arts and Crafts Show.** 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Audrey Moore RECenter, 8100 Braddock Road, Burke. Top quality handmade arts and crafts will be offered by nearly 120 of the area's finest artisans selling handmade items and plenty of great gifts to choose from. Visitors will also be able to find clothes, drawings, photography, pottery, ceramics and metal and wood crafted items. Admission is \$2 per person; children ages 12 and under are free.

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# ENTERTAINMENT

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

## Ongoing

### Inaugural Workhouse Glass National 2015.

Through Jan. 17. W-16, Vulcan Gallery, Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Join for the family-friendly exhibitions of glass art and the opening reception on Tuesday, Nov. 10, 6-8 p.m. [workhousearts.org](http://workhousearts.org), 703-585-2900.

**FCPS Art Teachers Exhibition.** Nov. 14-Dec. 6. W-16 McGuireWoods Gallery, Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Join for the exhibitions by the FCPS best art teachers. Discover the breadth of talent found in FCPS as you view works by art teachers. The exhibit will feature various media, unified by the artist's passion to educate. [workhousearts.org](http://workhousearts.org). 703-585-2900.

**Sue Grace Art Exhibition.** Nov. 14-Dec. 6. Workhouse Arts Center, Building W-10 Gallery, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. Her paintings share the experience of giving birth, explore the bridge between abstract and figurative expression. [Gracefamily999@verizon.net](mailto:Gracefamily999@verizon.net). [www.workhousearts.org](http://www.workhousearts.org). 703-585-2900.

**Children's Theatre: "The Nutcracker."** 1-2:15 p.m. & 3-4:15 p.m. Saturdays. Dec. 5, 12, 19, 26. W-3 Theatre, Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Presented by Mestey Films Productions. Playwright Vianlix Mestey produces an original re-telling of the favorite holiday story in play form. Running time 75 minutes with one intermission, appropriate for all ages. \$9-\$13. [workhousearts.org](http://workhousearts.org). 703-585-2900.

### THURSDAY-SATURDAY/NOV. 19-21

**"Noises Off."** 7-10 p.m. Robinson Secondary School, 5035 Sideburn Road, Burke. Hired to helm an Americanized take on a British play,



PHOTO COURTESY OF WORKHOUSE ARTS CENTER

**The Inaugural Workhouse Glass runs through Jan. 17 at the Vulcan Gallery at the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton. This exhibition, juried by Maurine Littleton, features the breath of contemporary glass artwork being created throughout the United States.**

director Lloyd Dallas attempts to control an eccentric group of actors. During practice, things run smoothly. However, serious chaos ensues during performances leading up to a Broadway premiere. \$12. 703-402-6653.

### THURSDAY/NOV. 19

**Pohick Christmas Mart.** 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Pohick Church, 9301 Richmond Highway, Lorton. The Parish House and the Vestry House will be transformed into a festive Christmas atmosphere with rooms filled with Arts and Crafts, a Consignment Shop, and a Pantry Shelf with fresh baked goods, homemade apple butter, and

frozen casseroles. The Docent Guild will be leading tours of our historic church, and a delicious luncheon will be served by ladies dressed in colonial costumes. [www.pohick.org](http://www.pohick.org). 703-339-6572.

### THURSDAY-SUNDAY/NOV. 19-22

#### Peter Pan: The Boy Who Hated Mothers.

Thursday-Sunday, 8 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, 2 p.m. George Mason Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. Exploring the original ideas and inspirations behind this iconic fantasy unveils a darker story of the boy who wouldn't grow up. This is Peter Pan as you have never seen it before but how it was always meant to be told. \$10, \$15. [cfa.gmu.edu](http://cfa.gmu.edu). 888-945-2468.

### FRIDAY-SATURDAY/NOV. 20-21

#### Annual Craft Fair.

Friday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. St. Matthews United Methodist Church, 8617 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. Over 35 crafters, Enjoy lunch in our cafe along with our bake sale. All proceeds benefit United Methodist Women Mission Projects. Free. [www.stmatthewsumc.org](http://www.stmatthewsumc.org). 703-978-3500.

### SATURDAY/NOV. 21

#### Bollywood Masala Orchestra and Dancers of India.

8 p.m. George Mason University's Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. By combining traditional Indian and Western instruments, "The Spirit of India" presents Indian music and dance as it has never been heard or seen before. Seventeen professional artists, including outstanding musicians, singers and dancers, lead a musical journey to Mumbai and beyond, filling the stage with vivid colors, mesmerizing movement and hypnotic rhythms. 888-945-2468. [cfa.gmu.edu](http://cfa.gmu.edu).

### SATURDAY-SUNDAY/NOV. 21-22

#### City of Fairfax Holiday Craft Show.

Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Fairfax High School, 3501 Rebel Run, Fairfax. Over 200 juried crafters and gourmet food vendors. \$5, \$8, free for under 18. Free shuttle bus. [www.fairfaxholidayshow.com](http://www.fairfaxholidayshow.com). 703-385-7858.

#### The Nutcracker.

2 p.m. 6 p.m. Ernst Community Cultural Center, NVCC Annandale Campus, 8333 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. Presented by the Burke Civic Ballet, come share in the magic of the holiday tradition. \$28, \$20. Order tickets at [www.buffas.com](http://www.buffas.com). Contact [burkecivicalballet@gmail.com](mailto:burkecivicalballet@gmail.com) for more information.

### SUNDAY/NOV. 22

#### Hands On Activities Day.

1-4 p.m. Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Activities include demonstrations and actual use of 100 year old telegraph sets, display of Civil War telegraph insulators, viewing the operation of the railroad

"crossing guard" equipment, and building and painting model train scenery. Free for museum members and children under 4. \$2 ages 5-15, \$4 16 and older. [jhill6712@aol.com](mailto:jhill6712@aol.com).

### 23rd Annual Burke Area CROP Hunger

**Walk.** 1:30 p.m. Living Savior Lutheran Church, 5500 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Walk 6K/3.7 miles or shorter Golden Mile to support local and global efforts to fight world hunger and bring disaster relief to victims of recent disasters. Proceeds benefit international relief and development efforts of Church World Service and local Ecumenical Community Helping Others (ECHO) in Springfield and Western Fairfax Christian Ministries (WFCM) in Chantilly. Nonperishable food will be collected for ECHO. Free. [ekringer@aol.com](mailto:ekringer@aol.com).

### THURSDAY/NOV. 26

#### Turkey Trot for Parkinson's.

9 a.m. Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. 5K Run/Walk and One-mile gobble wobble to benefit the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research. [www.WestSpringfieldRunning.com](http://www.WestSpringfieldRunning.com).

### SATURDAY/NOV. 28

**Donuts with Santa.** 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m. W-16, Vulcan Gallery, Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Santa is returning for a wonderful family event just in time for the holidays. Join Santa and his helpers for a special experience at Donuts With Santa. Each ticket holder will enjoy two doughnuts and a choice of juice or coffee while Santa and his elves read a classic Christmas story and lead a fun-filled family sing-a-long. \$20. [workhousearts.org](http://workhousearts.org). 703-585-2900.

#### Children's Theatre: "The Nutcracker."

1-2:15 p.m. and 3-4:15 p.m. W-3 Theatre, Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Presented by Mestey Films Productions. Playwright Vianlix Mestey produces an original re-telling of the favorite holiday story in play form. Running time 75 minutes with one intermission. All ages. \$9-\$13. [workhousearts.org](http://workhousearts.org). 703-585-2900.

**Workhouse Winter Wonderland.** 3-7 p.m. Full campus, Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Join and celebrate the holiday season creatively. Get into the holiday spirit by taking a special date or the whole family on a magical sleigh bell ride around our historic campus in horse-drawn carriages. Enjoy delicious holiday treats such as s'mores and roasted chestnuts by the fire. Free. [workhousearts.org](http://workhousearts.org). 703-585-2900.

**"A Chanticleer Christmas."** 8 p.m. George Mason Center for the Arts, 4373 Pond Drive, Fairfax. An evening of ancient hymns, venerated sacred songs, contemporary classics, gospel spirituals and treasured American and European carols, all performed with Chanticleer's lush harmonies and impeccable technique. \$32-\$54, half-price for children and youth through grade 12. [cfa.gmu.edu](http://cfa.gmu.edu). 888-945-2468.

**Little Rocky Run First Blood Drive.** 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Little Rocky Run Recreation Center, 6201 Sandstone Way, Clifton. Find out if you are eligible at <http://www.inova.org/get-involved/blood-donor-services/donate-blood/eligibility-requirements>. Then, email [PantherPints@gmail.com](mailto:PantherPints@gmail.com) to make an appointment.

### FRIDAY-SATURDAY/DEC. 4-5

**Norwegian Festival/Bazaar.** Friday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Christ Lutheran Church, 3810 Meredith Drive, Fairfax. Fifth year with Norwegian café, Fjord horses, live music, Nordic Dancers, Norwegian food products and goods. Local Nordic artisans. Waffle, krumkake, lefse demos, baked goods and Kransekake sales. Free. [www.norwaydc.org](http://www.norwaydc.org). 703-573-5943.

### SATURDAY/DEC. 5

#### City of Fairfax Festival of Lights and Carols.

11:30-7 p.m. Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Come enjoy live holiday music, hot cider, s'mores by the Yule log, petting farm, Ferris wheel, caroling and lighting of the Christmas tree in the winter wonderland. Visit [www.fairfaxva.gov/about-us/special-events/festival-of-lights-and-carols](http://www.fairfaxva.gov/about-us/special-events/festival-of-lights-and-carols) for times and locations.

**Lunch with Santa.** 11:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Have lunch with Santa. \$6. Parents free. Ages 10 and under. Visit [www.fairfaxva.gov](http://www.fairfaxva.gov) for ticket information or call 703-385-7858.



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# Crafting Perfect Admissions Essays

Local educators offer advice on how to write effective independent school admissions essays.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

**C**inger Wilner spent almost every morning last month hovering over her MacBook Pro, at a window seat in Starbucks, scouring a series of essays. She was looking for fatal mistakes. Errors ranging from comma splices to illogical arguments could torpedo weeks of late-nights spent in front of a computer. The words weren't hers, though. They were those of her 13-year-old daughter, who is in the midst of applying for a slot at one of the Washington-region's independent schools.

"I haven't spent this much time proofreading since I was in college," said Wilner, an Arlington mother of two. "She's a good writer and put a lot of effort into these essays. But that's probably true of the other type-A students who are applying to these schools, too."

That's right: 'Tis the season for independent school admissions. Families are scrambling to meet the application deadlines for local private schools. In addition to school tours, open houses, applicant interviews and standardized tests, many independent schools require prospective students to demonstrate their writing and critical thinking abilities in the form of an essay.

"It ... gives the applicant another opportunity, beyond the interview, to share more about their passions, interests, character and creativity," said Lisa Knight, director of admission and financial aid at Flint Hill School in Oakton.

The essay is a chance for the applicant to give the admissions committee a glimpse of the qualities that distinguish them from

**"How do these kids think and are they able to express themselves thoughtfully and carefully and clearly in writing?"**

— Mark Reford, D.Phil.,  
of BASIS Independent School



Students seeking admission to many of the area's private schools, such as BASIS Independent School in McLean must write essays as part of the application process.

hundreds or even thousands of other students who seek one of a handful of slots at a school.

"We hope that the students will reveal something about themselves," said Clare M. Dame, director of enrollment management at Randolph-Macon Academy in Front Royal. "We want to get to know them and what motivates them. Hopefully some of their personalities will come through as they write about their goals or the person they admire."

Admissions officers at independent schools that are considered academically rigorous are looking for well-read students who have a solid command of grammar and punctuation. "As we are reviewing ... essays, we are assessing their ability to write," said Dame. "As a college prep school, we expect every student to go from Randolph Macon Academy

to a four-year college. In order to succeed ... a student needs to know how to write fairly well."

In addition to writing abilities, admissions committees review applicants' aptitudes for analytical thinking, creativity and intellectual curiosity. "Are they making a thorough and well-structured argument?" asks Mark Reford, D.Phil., of BASIS Independent School in McLean. "How intellectually resourceful are they? How do these kids think and are they able to express themselves thoughtfully and carefully and clearly in writing?"

"They should come ... with an ability to express arguments clearly and concisely," he continued. "Over the long term, what that involves is an education where the students are used to investigating topics where there isn't a right or wrong answer. They have to be used to thinking through a problem. What's important is the quality of their analysis."

Admissions officials look for applicants who demonstrate excitement about attending a particular school. "The ... essay gives us an idea of why they are considering our

school," said Dame. "It helps us to know them and what motivates them to come to a college-prep, Air Force JROTC school."

Applicants should use specific examples that show they understand the school's culture and environment and how they would fit into it. "In writing why they want to come to Randolph-Macon Academy, they need to be able to talk about the school itself so that we understand that it is an essay written specific to our programs, and not just a generic essay generated for all the schools that they might be considering," said Dame.

Admissions officers can spot essays for which applicants have received an abundance of help. Such assistance can become particularly apparent when a student's application includes a writing sample from a standardized test, such as the Secondary School Admission Test (SSAT), which requires students to organize and write essays in a limited amount of time without help. "We really value the essay from the SSAT because you're seeing their thought process and how they express themselves in a first draft," said Terri Collins, director of admissions, Oakcrest School in McLean.

Applicants should not eschew all assistance, however. In fact, school officials encourage applicants to get help proofreading their essays. Many families actually seek guidance from an independent educational consultant.

"We follow a strict code of ethics, so we don't help them write the essays or help them pretend to be someone else," said Leigh Ann Cahill of Independent School Options, an educational consulting firm in Alexandria. "But we show them how to present their best selves."

At the same time, essays that read like they've been written by the student, using age-appropriate language, are often the most engaging and most credible. "Don't necessarily try to write in the most erudite and intellectual manner unless that is natural for you," said Dame. "Efficient, concise language is most effective and often says what you mean to say better than trying to use the thesaurus."

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# A Heartwarming Production W. T. Woodson High School's 'Meet Me in St. Louis.'

BY GILLIAN WRIGHT  
MCLEAN HIGH SCHOOL

**From left:  
Madi Sarlo,  
Rachel  
Turner and  
Miriam  
Mendelson  
in W.T.  
Woodson  
High  
School's  
production  
of 'Meet Me  
in St. Louis.'**

PHOTO BY  
PAM HARDIN



**A**t first thought, it may seem that 1904 was a simpler time: no iPhones, no AP classes, no traffic to get stuck in. But the Smith family demonstrates that some problems, such as miscommunication and complicated relationships, were equally real in the Victorian era. W. T. Woodson High School's production of "Meet Me in St. Louis" beautifully captured the individual struggles and joys of the endearing Smith family as they encounter change, develop relationships

## CAPPIES REVIEW

and learn to value each other above all else.

Based on the 1944 film of the same title, "Meet Me in St. Louis" follows the four Smith daughters and their brother as they prepare for the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. When their father announces the family will be moving to New York, the family is distraught, but as they mourn their beloved home city, they find solace in one another. The musical was written by Hugh Martin, Ralph Blane, and Hugh Wheeler, and opened on Broadway in 1989.

Starring as Esther, the second-eldest daughter and the family's ringleader, Miryam Mendelson displayed angelic vocals

and an accomplished emotional range. Whether daydreaming about the boy next door or defending her sisters, Mendelson was full of life and thrilling to watch. Playing John Truett, Esther's beau, Drew Bondy matched Mendelson's vocals with his own marvelous voice and portrayed a thoroughly young man. As the oldest Smith daughter, Rose (Rachel Turner) epitomized a temperamental, lovelorn teenage girl. Fluctuating between devotion to her younger siblings and infatuation with lover Warren Sheffield (Matthew Bendus), Turner demonstrated clear acting superiority accompanied by an

enchancing singing voice.

Among the best musical numbers of the night was "The Banjo," in which Lon (Jacob Lamb), the sole Smith son, led family and friends in a new dance he learned at college.

Though his vocals were captivating, most entertaining was his tap-dancing solo. Mr. and Mrs. Smith (Blake Phillips and Gracie Malin) shared a delicate yet delightful chemistry; their loving interactions with each other and with their children elucidated how such a charming group of young adults could be raised. Completing the

household, maid Katie (Madi Sarlo) contributed fiery Irish wit and wisdom to the family. Katie's bright personality was best showcased in "A Touch of the Irish," when she decides to share with Esther and Rose some insight on handling less than ideal beaux.

Producing a show set over a century ago is no simple feat, but authentic costumes and a remarkable set transitioned the audience with ease to Missouri, 1904. From full-length ballgowns to children's pinafores, the costumes were extensive, elegant, and fitting of the Victorian era. In combination with subtle yet professional makeup, each actor was made to look his or her best. Accompanied by detailed props, the set of the Smith's home was truly lovely. For the most part, the show was well-lit, and despite occasional issues with balancing mics, the sound was masterfully accomplished without any feedback.

The excitement with which the Smith family anticipated the World's Fair and the amusement they derived from singing together, gathered around a piano, sharply contrast today's overscheduled, under-rested society. W. T. Woodson High School's heartwarming production of "Meet Me in St. Louis" serves as a reminder that though cultural trends come and go, the value of a loving family will never diminish.

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11/25/2015.....Celebrating Gratitude, Thanksgiving

### DECEMBER

12/2/2015.....Wellbeing

12/9/2015.....Holiday Entertainment & Gift Guide II

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# Area Writer Celebrates With a Book Launch

**'Boundaries of the Wind' becomes local author's most recent work.**

BY MARISSA BEALE  
THE CONNECTION

Urmilla Khanna was never a writer; her friends and family knew her as a doctor. Growing up in India, she knew what she wanted to do at an early age, and began her pre-med studies at the age of 15. By the time she was 17, she enrolled in medical school, and by the age of 22 she became a medical doctor.

"In India it was very streamlined," said Khanna, whose father supported her studies. But her life became a paradox when she returned home from school only to find that her father had arranged a marriage for her.

"I was very rebellious about the thought that my father had arranged a marriage," she said. "On the one hand my father trusted me to treat patients, but at home I had to be an absolutely obedient daughter."

**OUT OF THIS TENSION** grew a story that would fill the pages of Khanna's book, "Boundaries of the Wind," which was published earlier in 2015.

The book launch took place at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax in October, bringing her friends, family members and fellow writers together.

"It's been a long process," said her grand-



**Urmilla Khanna (front, second from right) is the author of "Boundaries of the Wind," a memoir of growing up in India, going through an arranged marriage and starting a new life with her husband in the United States. Celebrating the release of her new book are her family members and close friends.**

daughter, Anjali Khanna. "I found [the book] surprisingly relatable. She talks about wanting to be intellectually curious. I'm figuring out who I want to be and she was figuring out the same."

Khanna moved to the United States with her arranged husband in 1963. Despite initial aversion to the idea of being told whom to marry, she came to terms with it.

"I was not married against my wishes. I started to take interest in the man and the choices I was given." Her husband, Kris, had one more year of postgraduate study left in the United States, and planned to return to India in order to marry before completing his studies. He and Khanna met each other

only briefly before marrying 10 days later.

They moved to Connecticut where Khanna got to know her husband, who she said became her very best friend. She worked part-time jobs in the basic sciences, needing to be recertified to practice medicine. Raising two small children, she eventually did everything to meet all licensing requirements and board certifications, and earning her master's in pharmacology in Ann Arbor.

They moved to Annandale, where she had a pediatric practice in the City of Fairfax located off of West Drive across from the Old Courthouse. She had a solo practice for about 25 years.

However, the untimely death of her husband in 2003 caused her life to take a different turn. She expected them to have a long and happy retirement together.

"When he was no longer around I didn't know what to do with myself. My son suggested that I start writing my feelings in a book." To take her mind off things, she started traveling and considering a second career.

"I knew I had to engross myself in something that would engross my life," she said. Without any formal training in how to be a writer, Khanna enrolled in a Fairfax County ACE Class taught by Joanne Glenn.

"Students can choose what they write about and we try to teach them the conventions of the genre," said Glenn.

"I took my first class with Joanne," said Mary Lucas, a friend of Khanna's who attended her book launch. "In my first class I sat by Urmilla."

**THE TITLE** of her book comes from a quote by her husband, who said, "Just like the wind, knowledge has no boundaries." Khanna never planned to craft a book, but writing and coaching from her teacher helped her to put a story together.

"Everybody has a story to tell if you really delve into it and work hard at bringing out the heart. If you write it from you heart, everybody has a story. You just have to really work very hard," she said.

Khanna has maintained friendships with individuals vastly different from herself.

"My own temperament has been described as boundless," she said with a laugh. Her book can be purchased on Amazon.

## Gift Ideas for the Gardener

BY ELLEN PETERSON MLD,  
MASTER GARDENER  
AND HORTICULTURIST

The holidays are here and you may be struggling to find the perfect gift for the gardener in your life. Here are a few suggestions to consider now or at any time during the year:

### 1. Hori-hori Garden Knife

This tool is one of my favorites because it's so versatile. It digs, plants, weeds, cuts, saws and even measures. The stainless steel blade is about seven-inches long and slightly curved, sharp on one side and serrated on the other.

### 2. Garden Gloves

I go through several pair of garden gloves every year. They get wet, get lost and develop holes. I can guarantee your gardener would welcome another pair, as well. Prices of gloves vary widely, depending on how they're made. The most economical are made of cotton; however, the most popular gloves have been dipped in nitrile, a latex-type material offering additional protection without bulk. They work well for pulling even small weeds. Lambskin or deer-skin gloves are pricier but offer more protection as well as flexibility for working comfortably. You can get short or elbow-length gloves that

provide maximum protection when dealing with thorny shrubs such as roses.

### 3. Pruners

Good pruners are essential tools for gardeners, and as with gloves, a gardener likes having multiple pairs for different tasks. Pruners come in a wide range of prices, but don't skimp here. Less expensive pruners will probably lose their edge and alignment within a short time, making them more likely to damage plants. Gardeners prefer to use bypass pruners to give a good clean cut versus anvil pruners, which tend to pinch plant stems.

### 4. Garden Weed Hoe

While weeding can be very zen and meditative, it can also be a time-consuming task that gardeners would, at times, prefer not to do. A weed hoe is a great tool to make this job easier. The hoe has a razor-sharp edge that will cut tops off weeds when it skims the surface of the soil. Repeatedly cutting the tops removes a weed's food source and will eventually kill the plant. The weed hoe can save a gardener many hours of difficult kneeling or bending. Again, buy the best quality hoe you can afford—one with a dull blade or uncomfortable handle will be frustrating to use.

### 5. Garden kneelers and garden benches

Gardeners spend a lot of time on their knees, pulling weeds and planting bulbs, annuals and perennials. A garden kneeler is a soft foam pad that can relieve pressure on the knees and make jobs easier. As an alternative, garden benches or seats are useful for gardeners who have difficulty kneel-

ing or doing so for an extended period of time. I've seen some benches function in different ways by flipping them back and forth for kneeling or sitting. Another related option is a garden seat with wheels that also provides space for storage and moves easily.

### 6. Garden tubs, trugs or bags

These containers are all useful to gardeners for collecting weeds and debris. Tubs are typically made of hard-sided plastic; trugs have flexible plastic sides; and bags are usually made from reinforced plastic with soft sides. I've always liked the collapsible type that easily stores in my garage when it isn't used. Sizes and weights vary to meet the needs of most gardeners and budgets.

### 7. Books

Gardeners can discover wonderful advice and ideas in gardening books. Every year, I find new titles I love and have to add to my library. These are a few of my favorites you might see at the library, online or at nearby bookstores. I'm certain your gardener (or you) will find inspiration in one of these titles:

"Square Foot Gardening" by Mel Bartholomew was originally published in 1981 and is based on the PBS program by the same name. This is the book I've always followed for planting my vegetable garden. It's a perfect resource for homeowners to use for growing their own food in limited space.

"Perennial Combinations" is one of several books written by C. Colston Burrell, from Charlottesville. He offers advice to create fabulous groups of plants

that will look great and grow well together in different environmental situations. Another wonderful book by Burrell is Native Alternatives to Invasive Plants. He gives great suggestions to replace plants that we're learning are highly invasive to our environment.

"The New York/Mid-Atlantic Gardener's Book of Lists" by Bonnie Lee Appleton from Virginia Tech and Lois Trigg Chaplin is one of the most useful books I own. This sourcebook provides over 200 lists of plants for specific locations and uses in the garden.

"The American Woodland Garden" by Rick Darke is a fabulous guide to designing, planting, and maintaining a garden in the woods. His stunning photographs show a natural palette of plants and the effects they create in the garden. The Natural Garden by Ken Druse also gives wonderful advice and displays spectacular photographs for the homeowner/natural garden designer. "Bringing Nature Home" by Douglas Tallamy, a professor at the University of Delaware, offers an interesting discussion of how the choices we make as homeowners and gardeners can impact the biodiversity of life. This book is truly a must-read for all of us.

"Planting in a Post-Wild World" by local authors Thomas Rainer and Claudia West is my favorite new book for 2015. Rainer (who also writes a blog titled Grounded Design and West discuss a powerful alternative to traditional horticulture: designed plantings that function like naturally occurring plant communities. They reveal how to create landscapes that are sustainable, resilient, beautiful and diverse.



# SPORTS



**The Lake Braddock girls' cross country team on Nov. 13 won its second state championship in the last four years.**



**The Lake Braddock boys' cross country team repeated as state champion.**

PHOTOS BY ED LULL

## Lake Braddock Wins Girls', Boys' XC State Titles

**T**he Lake Braddock girls' and boys' cross country teams won state championships on Nov. 13 at Great Meadow.

The girls' team produced a score of 44, finishing ahead of Oakton (76) and Madison (89). It was the Bruins' second state title in the last four years.

The Bruins had four harriers finish in the top 15, led by junior Kate Murphy, who won the individual state title with a time of 18:20.

Sophomore Sarah Daniels placed 10th for Lake Braddock (19:07), junior Emily Schiesl was 11th (19:10) and senior Sonya Butseva placed 14th (19:19).

Sophomore Samantha Schwerts com-

pleted the Lake Braddock top five with a 16th-place finish (19:25).

West Springfield senior Reagan Bustamante earned all-state honors with an eighth-place finish (19:02) and South County junior Faith Zolper took ninth (19:07).

The Lake Braddock boys' team posted a score of 46. Madison finished runner-up with a score of 106, followed by Cosby (127), Robinson (150) and Woodson (154). It was the Bruins' second straight state title and third consecutive top-two finish.

Senior Colin Schaefer was the Bruins' top finisher, placing fourth with a time of 16:02. Junior Conor Lyons placed eighth (16:16), senior Spencer Jolley took 11th (16:24),



**Lake Braddock senior Colin Schaefer placed fourth at the VHSL 6A state cross country meet on Nov. 13 at Great Meadow.**

senior Cavanaugh McGaw finished 14th (16:26) and junior Evan Chase finished 22nd (16:49).



**Woodson senior Robert Lockwood finished fifth at the VHSL 6A state cross country meet on Nov. 13 at Great Meadow.**

Woodson senior Robert Lockwood placed fifth (16:06), earning all-state honors. Robinson senior Hunter Jutras placed 13th (16:26).

## West Springfield Volleyball Falls One Win Shy of States

**Spartans won first conference/district title since 2007.**

BY JON ROETMAN  
THE CONNECTION

**A**fter capturing the program's first conference/district championship since 2007 and defeating South Lakes and Patriot in the regional tournament, the West Springfield volleyball team needed to win just one more set to secure a berth in the state tournament.

The Spartans led defending state runner-up Madison 2-1 entering the fourth set of their 6A North region semifinal match on Nov. 12 at West Springfield High School, but couldn't close out the Warhawks. Madison won the final two sets, handing West Springfield its first five-set defeat of the year while ending the Spartans' season with a 3-2 (23-25, 25-18, 23-25, 25-15, 15-6) victory.

"It's tough to be that close, to taste it and not get it," West Springfield head

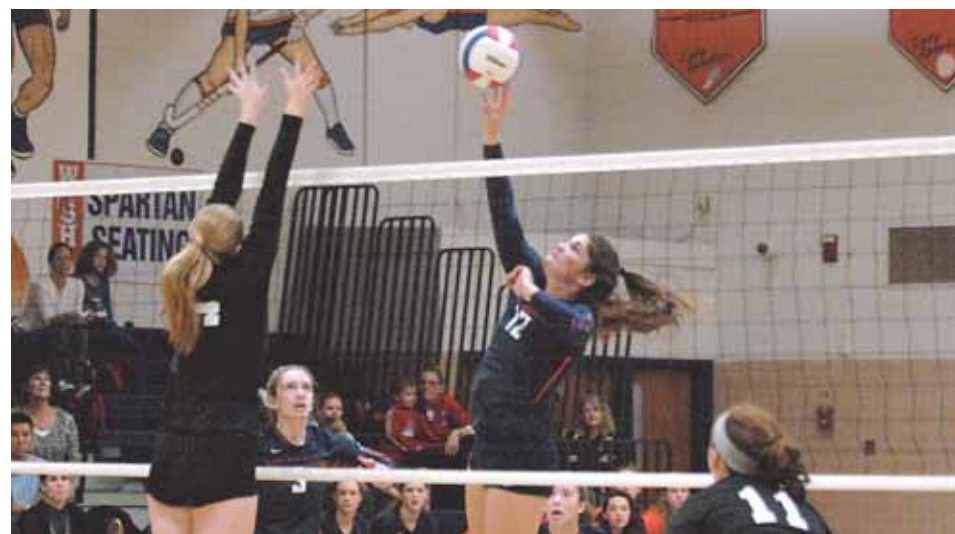


PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

**West Springfield senior Megan Marin had 12 kills against Madison on Nov. 12 in the 6A North region volleyball semifinals.**

coach Stephanie Noriega said, "but I'm so incredibly proud of my team."

West Springfield finished the season with a 17-4 record, including a 12-match win streak prior to its season-ending loss to Madison. The Spartans went 4-1 in five-set matches, including a pair of five-set victories in the region tournament.

West Springfield swept Lake Braddock in the Conference 7 tournament championship match on Nov. 5, giving the Spartans their first title since 2007.

"That was our goal all season long," Noriega said. "We looked at our banner every single day before practice started and visualized the 2015 going up there. We knew

all season long that we were going to capture the [conference] championship."

The Spartans won the conference title one year after failing to qualify for the region tournament. How did West Springfield turn things around?

"This team had more passion, in my opinion, to win," senior Brittany Padgett said. "We had the drive to win. That's why 90 percent of the time ... we'd go to five sets, we'd win. We have that fight in us."

Padgett earned Conference 7 MVP honors despite transitioning from setter to outside hitter during the season.

Against Madison, Padgett and senior middle blocker Megan Marin each had 12 kills.

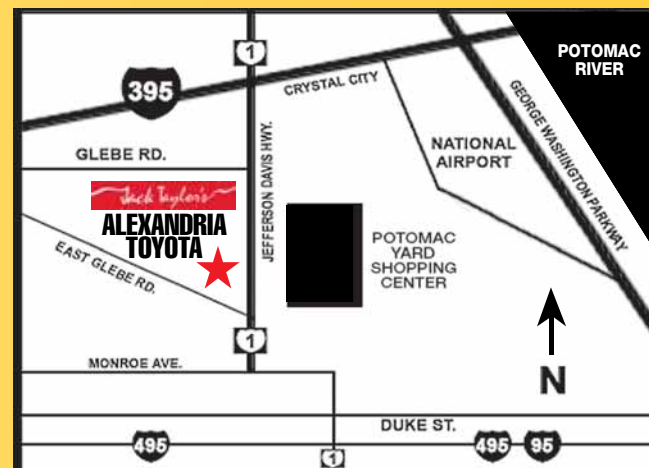
"[Padgett] is one of the most ... positively aggressive athletes that I have worked with," Noriega said. "She is so hungry for that ball. ... Due to injury, we did this huge lineup change and moved her to the outside. She's hit outside for a month and a half and she's one of the top outside hitters in the region ... which speaks volumes to her all-around skill."

West Springfield's Tyler Wernecke had 18 digs and Jasmine Roy had 14 against Madison. Sara Khatouri finished with 34 assists and Hailey Olsen totaled six blocks.



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## FOOTBALL ROUNDUPS

### 6A North Football Playoffs Down to Final Eight

Six of the top eight seeds advanced to the 6A North region football quarterfinals, while No. 4 Madison and No. 8 West Springfield had their seasons come to an end.

Madison was on the losing end of the biggest upset of the opening round, falling 27-19 to No. 13 Chantilly. West Springfield lost to No. 9 West Potomac 40-19, despite beating the Wolverines 28-9 during the regular season.

No. 1 South County advanced with a 35-21 victory over No. 16 Annandale. Stallions quarterback DeAndre Clayton completed 18 of 27 passes for 305 yards and three touchdowns, with one interception. He also carried 12 times for 61 yards and a score.

No. 2 Lake Braddock blanked No. 15 Woodson 49-0. Bruins quarterback Kyle Edwards went 25-of-31 for 292 yards and five touchdowns. Running back Ibrahim Mansaray carried seven times for 81 yards and two scores.

No. 5 Robinson faced No. 13 Centreville for the second straight week and edged the Wildcats 24-21. The Rams trailed 21-14 early in the fourth quarter but won on a 20-yard Nathan Musso field goal with 3 seconds remaining. Robinson running backs Da'Jon Lee, Sean Foncha and Roman Lowery each scored a touchdown.

The quarterfinals will be held on Friday, Nov. 20. South County will host West Potomac at 7:30 p.m.; Lake Braddock will host No. 7 Battlefield at 7 p.m.; No. 3 Westfield will host No. 6 South Lakes at 7:30 p.m.; and Robinson will host Chantilly at 7 p.m.

## BULLETIN BOARD

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

### SUNDAY/NOV. 22

**Burke Historical Society Meeting.** 4:30 p.m. Abiding Presence Lutheran Church, 6304 Lee Chapel Road, Burke. Susan Gray from the City of Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center will give a presentation entitled, "Love and Legacy: The Civil War Romance of Antonia Ford and Major Joseph C. Willard."

### THURSDAYS/DEC. 3-FEB. 3

**Grief Support Group.** 10:30 a.m.-noon. Clifton Presbyterian Church, 12748 Richards Lane, Clifton. The Clifton Presbyterian Church is offering to the church and community a Grief Support Group for those who have experienced a recent death and loss in their lives. This group will offer a safe and supportive place for participants to explore ways to walk the journey of grief and to "wrestle" with difficult, and sometimes unanswerable, questions. Dec. 3, 10, 17; Jan. 7, 12, 21, 28; Feb. 3. [office@cliftonpc.org](mailto:office@cliftonpc.org). 703-830-3175.

### ONGOING

#### Blanket and Children's Winter Coat Drive.

Through Dec. 5. Region-wide effort to help more than 4 million refugees fleeing from Syria and Iraq due to ISIL and civil war violence. Gently used blankets and children's winter coats will be collected and will be shipped to refugees who have fled to Turkey. [www.helpsyrianrefugees.us](http://www.helpsyrianrefugees.us)  
**Senior Fall Prevention Classes.** 1:30-2:30 p.m., at the Woodlands Retirement Community, 4320 Forest Hill Drive, Fairfax. Tuesday and/or Thursday classes in a heated pool designed to work on balance and core muscles for injury prevention. \$10. 703-667-9800.





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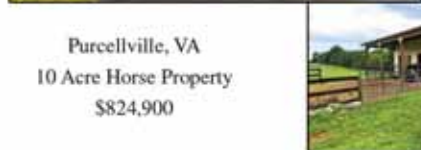
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