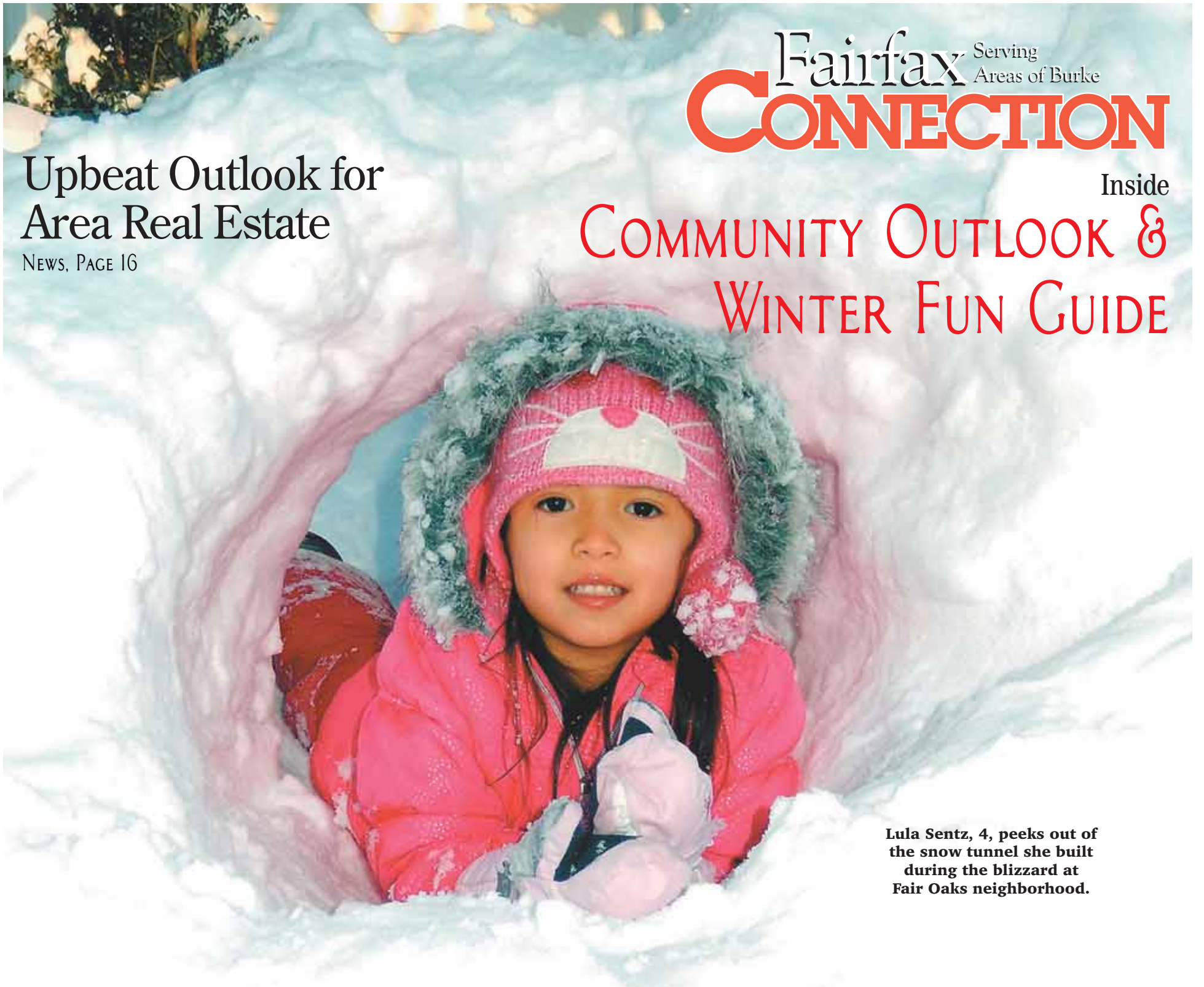


Upbeat Outlook for Area Real Estate

NEWS, PAGE 16

Inside COMMUNITY OUTLOOK & WINTER FUN GUIDE



Lula Sentz, 4, peeks out of the snow tunnel she built during the blizzard at Fair Oaks neighborhood.

‘Snowzilla,’ the Blizzard of 2016

NEWS, PAGE 3

Paradise for Chocolate Lovers

NEWS, PAGE 4

Fairfax Water

NOTICE OF PUBLIC INPUT SESSION

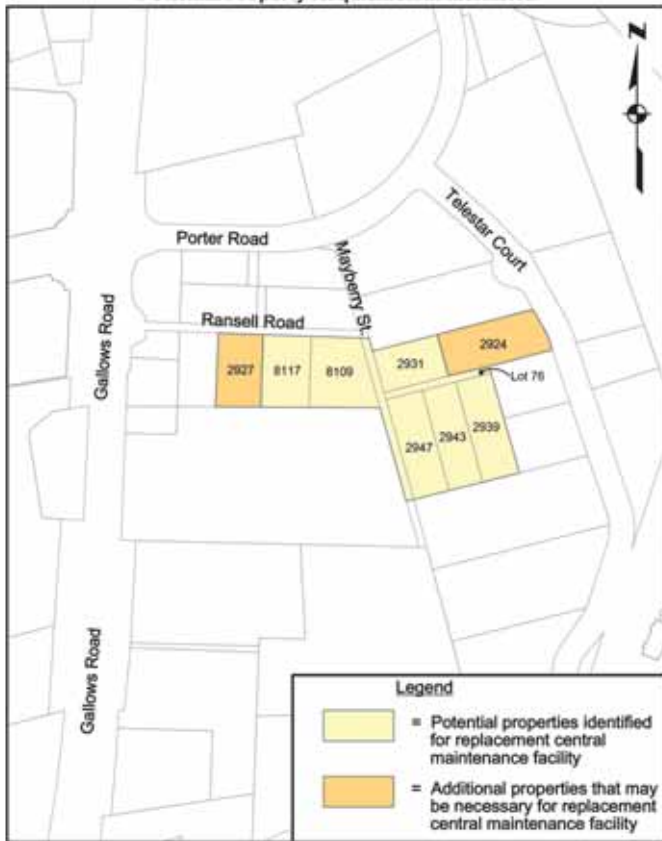
February 4, 2016 at 6:30 p.m.

The Fairfax County Water Authority ("Fairfax Water") will hold a public input session at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 4, 2016, to receive and consider public comments on the potential acquisition of properties.

These properties are located at 2931, 2939, 2943, 2947 and Lot 76, Mayberry Street and 8109 and 8117 Ransell Road, Falls Church, Virginia.

Fairfax Water is also considering acquisition of additional properties: 2924 Telestar Court and 2927 Gallows Road.

Potential Property Acquisition in Merrifield



Fairfax Water may seek to acquire some or all of these properties for public use to serve as the site for a replacement central maintenance facility that Fairfax Water must construct and operate to meet the existing and future public water service requirements of its customers.

This location was suggested by the Greater Merrifield Business Association and others as a feasible site for such a facility. Information on this meeting can be found on Fairfax Water's website at this address:

http://www.fairfaxwater.org/notices/pis_2016_02_04.pdf

The public input session will be held in Fairfax Water's offices at 8570 Executive Park Avenue, Fairfax, VA 22031. Those wishing to speak at this session should call Eva Catlin at (703) 289-6017.

Interested parties also may submit written comments to

PublicHearingComments@fairfaxwater.org

or mail written comments to:

Fairfax Water
Public Input Session Comments
8570 Executive Park Avenue
Fairfax, VA 22031

All written comments must be received by close of business on **Wednesday, February 3, 2016** to be included in the record of the public input session.

NEWS

Open Houses, Exhibits during Chocolate Festival

❖ **Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center**, 10209 Main St., 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

This building was constructed in 1873 with bricks made at the Farr property across Main Street. The oldest brick, two-story, school building remaining in Fairfax cost just \$2,750 to build. Stop in for chocolate treats while learning about the City's colorful history; free admission.

❖ **Historic Records and Archives**, Historic Fairfax Court House, 4000 Chain Bridge Road, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Visit a historic display of legal documents, including: A page from the polling done around the country as citizens voted to secede from the Union; the "Civil War Rulebook" filled with graffiti from the soldiers stationed there; George Washington's will; a church pew deed; and a court order written by George Mason in 1767 to settle a boundary dispute between Peter Smith and James Jennings.

❖ **Ford House**, 3977 Chain Bridge Road, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Visit the childhood home of Antonia Ford, a Confederate spy during the American Civil War. She was imprisoned and fell in love with her Union jailer, whom she later mar-

ried; their son built the Old Town Hall. Free admission.

❖ **Legato School**, Route 123/Chain Bridge Road, between Judicial Drive and Sager Avenue, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Learn about the noble heritage of America's favorite flavor and play some games at the one-room Legato School, the last of its kind in Fairfax County.

It's been restored and is furnished as it was in the 1870s. Now operated as a museum, Legato School is on the grounds of the historic Fairfax County Courthouse; free admission.

❖ **Ratcliffe-Allison House**, 10386 Main St., noon-4 p.m. The oldest standing house in the City of Fairfax depicts the lives of everyday people in 19th-century Fairfax and will offer visitors chocolate treats. Built in 1812, it was once a cobbler shop. Kitty Pozer, a famed Fairfax gardener and writer, lived here until 1981; free admission.

Only the museum, Legato School and Ratcliffe-Allison House will be open to the public both days of the Chocolate Festival. The other venues will just receive visitors on Saturday, Feb. 6.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington, Fairfax County Region

3rd Annual Casino Night

Saturday, March 12, 2016
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PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

During the blizzard on Saturday, Jan. 23, all that's visible of the cars in the foreground are their windshield wipers.

'Snowzilla,' the Blizzard of 2016

Last weekend's (Jan. 22-23) historic blizzard closed schools, government, stores and businesses while burying the local area in more than 30 inches of snow. Here are some photos taken in Fair Oaks.



Andre Walter takes a break from shoveling out his car to pick up his son, Sirron, almost 2.



Ryan Jones takes his children, Cooper, 2, and Ellie, 9, for a walk in the snow.



Sam Zandi shovels the wall of snow barricading his vehicle.



A happy Sophia Sentz, 8, looks out of her snow tunnel, Sunday morning.



PHOTOS BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION

The lights of the Mosaic District Target in Fairfax were barely visible Saturday during Winter Storm Jonas.



Snow drifts covered entire cars in the Merrifield area during the height of the storm.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

David and Jenna Peterson's Australian Shepherd Loki had no problem navigating the yard of their Fairfax home.



A Day in Snow in Fairfax

Bill Behm (owner of bluefrog plumbing and drain), and his dog Nantucket.

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NEWS

Paradise for Chocolate Lovers

Fairfax's annual festival is Feb. 6 and 7.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

When it comes to chocolate, the City of Fairfax does it up right. Featuring everything from cakes to cookies, cupcakes, candy, ice cream and fudge, its 24th annual Chocolate Lovers Festival will be held Saturday, Feb. 6, from 10 a.m.-5 p.m., and Sunday, Feb. 7, from noon-4 p.m.

"After a tough snowstorm, nothing will put a smile on the faces of children and adults alike than chocolate," said Fairfax Mayor Scott Silverthorne. "The City's annual Chocolate Lovers Festival has become a must-attend event and was recognized last year as one of the best food festivals in Virginia by Virginia Living Magazine. If you're looking for fun, great food and a special way to celebrate Valentine's Day early, the City of Fairfax is the place to be."

One of the highlights is the Taste of Chocolate, where attendees purchase samples of a multitude of mouthwatering, chocolate treats from two floors full of vendors in Old Town Hall. Another is the Chocolate Challenge in which both professionals and home cooks compete to see who can make the most beautiful and creative chocolate sculptures, cakes and cupcakes.

There is even a chocolate-themed movie, plus chocolate-chip pancakes at the fire station and a slew of fun-filled activities for both children and adults, all day long. And the first event actually begins a week in advance. It is the Sweet History Walking Tour, this Saturday, Jan. 30, from 4:30-6 p.m., in Old Town Fairfax's Historic District.

It starts at the Ratcliffe Allison House, 10209 Main St., and includes Old Town Hall, Historic Fairfax County Courthouse and the Ford House and ends at De Clieu Coffee with complimentary hot chocolate. Cost is \$10/person and participants should bring flashlights. With one paying adult, one child 5 and under is free. Pre-registration is required; go to www.chocolatefestival.net; click on "Schedule of Events" and then "Sweet History Walking Tour."

Then on Feb. 6-7 will be a full slate of activities including face-painting, musical performances, fairytales, a fire-safety puppet show, a Chocolate Caper mock trial, cupcake-decorating, magic, juggling and open houses in historic buildings. All venues are handicap-accessible, and the Chocolate Express will provide free, shuttle service between event locations. It will run Feb. 6, from 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., and Feb. 7, from 11:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Pancakes, Taste of Chocolate

The fun kicks off Saturday, Feb. 6, at Fire Station 3, at 4081 University Drive, with the annual, Kiwanis Club of Fairfax Pancake Breakfast. From 8 a.m.-1 p.m., enjoy regular or chocolate-chip pancakes, plus sausage, coffee, juice and milk. Cost is \$8, adults; \$4, children ages 4-10. Children 3 and under eat free



PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Lily Mae Hamilton, 5, happily dips a treat into the chocolate fountain while mom Lora Ann and brother Jack, 1, watch.

with a paying adult (limit two children per adult). Face painting will be available for \$2/child.

The festival's centerpiece, the Taste of Chocolate, will be held Feb. 6, from 10 a.m.-5 p.m., and Feb. 7, from noon-4 p.m., in Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive (corner of Main Street and University Drive). Strollers may be left on the building's front porch; a fully accessible entrance is at the door on Main Street.

Admission is free; visitors buy pogs for \$1 each and then browse the vendors' tables to see the wide array of chocolate treats being offered. They pay for their treats in pogs and may buy as many pogs as they want from roaming volunteers in red aprons.

The variety of goodies is a chocolate lover's dream-come-true. There are chocolate candies, bars, cakes and fudge, chocolate-covered strawberries and ice cream. And one of the biggest hits each year are the chocolate fountains into which customers may dip fruit, cream-filled doughnut holes or marshmallows.

This year's vendors include: C & D Sweets, CakeLove, Cakes by Shelby, Cameron's Coffee & Chocolates, Capitol Chocolate Fountains; Chocotenago, Confection Connection, Dave's Candy Kitchen, El Ceibo Chocolate, Fair Trade Winds, Fluffy Thoughts Cakes, Le Papiyon Chocolatier, Mike's Fudge, Sugar Mama's Ice Cream, The Capital Candy Jar, The Chocolatier's Palette, Virginia Chocolate Co. and Xtreme Ice Cream.

Chocolate Challenge

The Chocolate Challenge is a display of creative, whimsical and imaginative chocolate cakes, cupcakes and sculptures. It takes place at the Nutrition Kitchen, 3950 University Drive, and runs Feb. 6, from 10 a.m.-5 p.m., and Feb. 7, from noon-4 p.m. Admission is \$1/adult; children under 18 are free. A designated stroller-parking area is outside the building.

Both professionals and amateurs participate, and judges and visitors judge them in various categories. Visitors may use their admission ticket to vote for the People's Choice Award winner and also participate in the silent action of challenge entries, plus items from local businesses. Donated cakes and other items will be open for silent-auction bidding through Feb. 7 at 2:30 p.m. To enter the Chocolate Challenge, go to www.chocolatefestival.net and click on "appli

SEE CHOCOLATE, PAGE 10

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SPECIAL CONNECTIONS CALENDAR

Advertising Deadlines are the previous Thursday unless noted.

FEBRUARY

2/10/2016.....HomeLifeStyle
2/10/2016.....Valentine's Dining & Gifts II
2/17/2016.....A+ Camps & Schools
2/24/2016.....Pet Connection

MARCH

3/2/2016.....Wellbeing
3/9/2016.....HomeLifeStyle Real Estate Pullout
3/16/2016.....A+ Camps & Schools
3/23/2016....Spring Fun, Food, Arts & Entertainment
FCPS Spring Break 3/21-3/25

APRIL

4/6/2016.....Wellbeing – Senior Living Pullout
Easter Sunday is March 27
4/13/2016.....Real Estate Pullout – New Homes
4/20/2016.....A+ Camps & Schools
4/27/2016.....A+ Camps & Schools Pullout
4/27/2016.....Mother's Day Celebrations,
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- Springfield Connection
- Vienna/Oakton Connection

NEWS

John O'Neal Named City's Fire Chief

The City of Fairfax has announced the appointment of John O'Neal as chief of the City of Fairfax Fire Department. O'Neal, who has nearly three decades of experience in fire and rescue services, department leadership and emergency management, will lead the city's career fire department beginning Jan. 25.

O'Neal's experience includes five years as fire chief for the Town of Addison, Texas. It also includes planning, budgeting and directing comprehensive activities for fire suppression, emergency medical service, fire code enforcement, and emergency management. Previously, he served as fire chief for Manassas Park, Va.

He earned a bachelor's degree in fire administration from the University of Maryland, College Park and a master's degree in public administration from Troy State University.

He is a graduate of the Executive Fire Officer program at the

National Fire Academy and holds the Chief Fire Officer designation from the Center for Public Safety Excellence.

On selecting O'Neal as fire chief, City Manager Robert Sisson said, "The decision was difficult, given the high caliber of finalists. However, John's experience is an excellent combination of hands-on and management experience that will support a department with such a unique, strong relationship with the Fairfax Volunteer Fire Department." The City of Fairfax Fire Department has 77 career personnel who work with the Fairfax Volunteer Fire Department to provide fire and rescue services in the city and, on occasion, in the metropolitan Washington region. The city has a longstanding relationship with Fairfax County Fire Department for mutual aid for fire and rescue services.

O'Neal replaces David Rohr, who retired from the city in August 2015.

WEEK IN FAIRFAX

Creating Visual Body Map of 2016 Intentions in Fairfax City

Eileen Wilkinson, WELLarts Founder/Facilitator will present Vision Boards: Intentional Body Mapping, for ages 16 and up, on Monday, Feb. 1, 5-6:15 p.m. at Green Acres Center, 4401 Sideburn Road in Fairfax. Begin with a brief meditation to allow the "artist" within to become quiet and allow a free flow of ideas. Participants will be asked to create intentions of what they would like to draw into their life.

A blank body outline paper will be presented with colored pencils, paints, stamps, and markers for personalization. Regardless of drawing ability, participants will be asked to "sketch" in representations of what those intentions might look like, focusing on 3 areas: mind, body and spirit. These become Vision Boards for them to hang as a reminder to cultivate this reality. \$20. To register call 703-359-2487.

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'Disappointing, Not Surprising'

Bills to rein in predatory lending die in Senate committee.

Have you ever paid 36 percent interest on a loan or credit card? Not likely. It's an outrageous rate, especially given that the actual cost of money is close to zero right now.

But right now, some people in Northern Virginia are paying more than 200 percent on loans secured by their car title. These are people who are both financially desperate and financially unsophisticated, who likely assume that regulation would keep a lender from bleeding them dry with unrestricted interest rates.

Predatory lending is a local issue, with car title lenders congregating in lower income areas like along Route 1 in the Mount Vernon area, and also queuing up near the border with Prince George's County, Md., where car title lending is illegal.

Earlier this week, a Virginia Senate committee killed a bill that would have capped consumer loan interest rates at 36 percent. It's hard to believe, but right now there are no limits to the interest rates that can be charged in Vir-

ginia. And car title lenders, which are not consumer loans, often have effective interest rates of more than 200 percent.

"Predatory lending is a major problem in the U.S. 1 Corridor," said Sen. Scott Surovell (D-36), who introduced the failed legislation to curb predatory lending. "Car title lenders have been abusing this loophole by charging rates over 200 percent. ... To rein in car title lender bait and switch tactics, I am proposing to limit interest rates on consumer finance loans at 36 percent." But that effort died in a Virginia Senate Committee this week.

Between 2010, when the Virginia General Assembly gave the green light to the car title lending industry, the total number of locations more than doubled from 184 to 395.

Some legislators claim this is a free market and personal responsibility issue, that people who have no other options should be able to turn to high interest lending as a last resort. But most people who turn to these loans would be better off without this last resort.

"It's a trap, and although it's presented as a loan it's really loan-sharking," said Jay Speech, executive director of the Virginia Poverty Law Center. "People who get into this end up much worse off than when they started."

We all pay the price when an industry preys on the poor. People who lose their cars can lose their jobs, then relying on the frayed and in-

Listen to Michael Pope's reports on predatory lending on WAMU

http://wamu.org/the_debt_trap

adequate safety net.

Michael Pope, who wrote about car title lending abuses when he worked for the Connection and Gazette Packet, recently completed a multi-part investigative series on predatory lending for WAMU, which you can listen to here: http://wamu.org/the_debt_trap

When his series concluded, the message of the damage of predatory lending seemed to resonate. Legislation to rein in the abuses of 200 percent interest seemed destined to make a difference.

This year, it will not.

Attorney General Mark Herring tweeted, "disappointing, not surprising" on Monday in response to the news that all four bills that sought to limit predatory lending were voted down in committee. Disappointing, but not surprising. A sad commentary.

— MARY KIMM

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sex Trafficking Was Illegal for Hundreds of Years

To the Editor:

Your article, "Money, Lax Laws Draw Sex Traffickers" (Connection, January 21-27) states "Last year, before the state of Virginia passed its first sex trafficking laws, SB 1188 and HB 1964, it was the last state in the United States with any sex trafficking legislation." The headline and this second paragraph would make one think that sex trafficking was not illegal in Virginia. This notion is utterly false. It has been illegal for hundreds of years. Just look at the Virginia Code: Article 2.1 Crimes by Gangs, Article 3 Kidnapping and Related Offenses, Article 4 Assaults and Bodily Woundings, Article 6 Extortion and Other Threats, and Article 7 Criminal Sexual Assault. Also remember, in 1994, Virginia eliminated pa-

role. I can assure you that anyone convicted of human trafficking related felonies under these articles does lots and lots of prison time.

Human trafficking has always been illegal. In fact, a number of years ago, an organization made a ridiculous accusation that Virginia's laws were weak on human trafficking. I commissioned a study by the Virginia State Crime Commission to look at every act this organization alleged was involved in human trafficking to see if there were any gaps in our laws. The result of the study showed that every single act was already illegal except for withholding a passport to force a person into prostitution. So we made that a felony.

The article says that HB 1964 and SB 1188 were our first hu-

man trafficking laws. Our first human trafficking laws were passed in the 1600s. What these two bills did was increase punishments on certain crimes that can be labeled as "human trafficking." We were very proud to have passed them. But all the acts were already illegal.

People can castigate Virginia on a number of issues. We don't have the same welfare benefits as other states, and because of our low tax rate, we don't have the same level of services as other states.

However, I can assure you that being weak on crime is certainly not a claim that applies to Virginia.

Del. Dave Albo (R-42)
Chairman, Courts of
Justice Committee

Maintaining Bike Trails

To the Editor:

I am writing to express my concern that the bike trails in our community are not being properly maintained by the county of Fairfax.

Part of what makes Fairfax Station a great place to live is the biking trails, they encourage people to be active and enjoy

nature.

I attended a public meeting where I asked how much money the county is spending on maintaining bike trails. I was surprised to hear that the budget doesn't include money for maintaining of the bike trails. Over the years I have noticed the bike trails have become more

cracked and bumpy due to normal wear and tear. If they become deteriorated to the point of not being able to enjoy biking and walking on them then our quality of life will suffer.

John Kliem
Student, South
County High School

Pet Photos for the Pet Connection

The Pet Connection, a twice-yearly special edition, will publish on Feb. 24, and photos and stories of your pets with you and your family should be submitted by Feb. 17.

We invite you to send us stories about your pets, photos of you and/or your family with your cats, dogs, llamas, alpacas, hamsters, snakes, lizards, frogs, rabbits, or whatever other creatures share your home or yard with you.

Tell us the story of a special bond between a child and a dog, the story of how you came to adopt your pet, or examples of amazing feats of your creatures. Do you volunteer at an animal shelter or therapeutic riding center or take your pet to visit people in a nursing home? Does your business have a pet? Is your business about pets? Have you helped to train an assistance dog? Do you or someone in your family depend on an assistance dog?

Or take this opportunity to memorialize a beloved pet you have lost.

Just a cute photo is fine too. Our favorite pictures include both pets and humans.

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Daniels Run Elementary Presents State of the School Report

The state of Daniels Run is strong and getting stronger," declared Daniels Run Elementary School principal Adam Erbrecht at his annual state of the schools report to the City of Fairfax School Board on Monday, Jan. 11 at the regular school board meeting.

Using the theme "Our Story" throughout the evening, Erbrecht echoed the story theme he and his teachers are following this year as they try to reach each and every student.

With videos from sixth grade students highlighting what they liked about the schools, Erbrecht showed how the school is serving as a second family for many of his students.

Erbrecht emphasized significant standards of learning score increases in subjects such as reading and math. In reading, DRES reading pass rate was 79 percent, an increase of 6 percent. In math, 88 percent of the students had a pass rate, almost a 20 percent increase from the previous years.

Erbrecht also looked at his school beyond the standard curriculum showing success in the arts, environmental studies and the enhanced autism program. In addition, Erbrecht and his assistant principal Dr.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

'Strong and getting stronger' - Daniels Run Elementary.

Dustin Wright focused on programs such as "Pride Time" – a dedicated school-wide program to support students with specific intervention that goes above and beyond the classroom.

"Teachers have already noticed the students making a tremendous amount of progress faster than they were anticipating because of this focused and persistent approach," said Dr. Wright.

To view the entire State of the Schools report, go to the City of Fairfax Website, <http://www.fairfaxva.gov/>, and click on "Meetings" on the right side.



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WINTER FUN & ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE



The Annual Lunar New Year Festival at Fair Oaks Mall is one of the largest of its kind. The 13th Annual Lunar New Year Festival will be on Feb. 6 and 7 from 1-5 p.m.

The Great Outdoors

Campfires aren't just for summer nights. Lake Accotink Park in Springfield invites everyone who loves the outdoors to **Campfire Saturdays**. Adventure awaits as you explore the woodlands and Lake Accotink spots where wildlife hides and resides. Program ends with a cozy campfire. Bring whatever you like to roast. S'mores provided. Scheduled campfires start between 6:30 to 7 p.m. on Feb. 27, March 26, April 16 and May 14. Topics vary each month. Cost is \$8 and \$10. Lake Accotink Park is located at 7500 Accotink Park Road, Springfield. Register at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/lake-accotink/>.

Not to be outdone, **Royal Lake Park** also offers **Campfire Saturdays** on Feb. 20, March 12 and April 30. It starts between 6:30 to 7 p.m. Royal Lake Park is located at 5344 Gainsborough Drive, Fairfax. After a nature program, come to the campfire with delicious things to roast. S'mores provided. Cost is \$8 and \$10. Register at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/press/html/psa067-15.htm>.

Take a **Night Hike** at **Burke Lake Park**, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station, on Sunday, Feb. 21. A naturalist will guide you in a search for wildlife. Warm up with campfire and s'mores after perambulating the winter woods. The hike starts at 6:30 p.m. Children must be accompanied by an adult regis-

tered in the program. Cost is \$8. To register, go to <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/burkelakepark/rides.htm>.

If you've had your fill of terrestrial creatures, see some celestial sights at **Burke Lake Park's Astronomy Campfire** on Sunday Feb. 7 and **Campfire Saturday: Stargazing** on Saturday, March 5. Enjoy a stroll along the shores of the lake and learn about the constellations, their stories and other features of the night sky. Learn what ancient cultures saw in the stars. An astronomical naturalist will identify the stars for you, along with having some telescopes on hand for folks to try out. After the program gather around the fire where s'mores are provided. Bring hot dogs, if you like. Program starts at 6:30 p.m. Cost is \$8. The park is located at 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Children must be accompanied by an adult registered in the program. To register, go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/burkelakepark/rides.htm.

For more active pursuits, the **Spring Backyard Burn Trail Running Series** takes place in some of the best trail networks in the area—Laurel Hill and Pohick Bay in Lorton and Hemlock Overlook in Clifton. This is a four series race and they are scheduled on March 6, 13 and April 17. The fourth race will be in Lake Fairfax Park in Reston on May 1. For more information, visit <http://www.ex2adventures.com/byb-spring.php>.

Celebrations

Happy New Year! Nope, it's not late, it's just in time to celebrate the Lunar New Year. On Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 6 and 7, Fair Oaks Mall will hold the **13th Annual Lunar New Year Festival** from 1 to 5 p.m. Presented by the Washington Hai Hua Community Center, the event is one of the largest of its kind with free performances, ceremonies and exhibitions. The mall is located at 11750 Fair Oaks mall, Fairfax. For more information, go to <http://www.shopfairoaksmall.com/events>.

For more lunar new year celebrations head on over to **NWBI 2016 Chinese New Year Celebrations** on Sunday, Feb. 7 from 1 to 4 p.m. at Johnson Center Newberry Hall at George Mason University located at 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. There will be dragon dances, dumpling cooking lesson, riddles, Chinese painting. Cost is \$2 to \$6. For more information, contact nwbius@yahoo.com.

Another beginning is Lent but before that there is **Mardi Gras 2016** at Fat Tuesday's on Tuesday, Feb. 9. Doors open at noon. Nine bands beginning at 3 p.m. and a special Mardi Gras menu will be on hand. Fat Tuesday's is located at 10673 Braddock Road, Fairfax. Find out more at <http://www.fatsfairfax.com/>.

Ah, love is in the air at the **Annual Valentine's Day Banquet** sponsored by the Family Ministry



A show in complete silence on a blacked stage, Mummenschanz will be at GMU's Center for the Arts on Friday, Feb. 5.

of the Greater Little Zion Baptist Church in Fairfax. The celebration is from 6:30 to 11 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 13 at Waterford Receptions, 6715 Commerce St., Springfield. All couples and singles are invited to fellowship and enjoy an evening of fine dining, music, dancing and featured entertainment. Cost is \$60 due by Feb. 7. Call 703-763-9111 to reserve.

Out of the Frozen Earth

Just in time for Valentine's Day, Merrifield Garden Center-Fair Oaks presents **Fun with Roses**. Enjoy an interactive demonstration of design secrets for romantic and friendship inspired rose creations on Sunday, Jan. 31 from 2 to 4 p.m. The garden center is located at 12101 Lee Highway, Fairfax. Refreshments will be served. Call 703-371-9351 for more information.

For less ornamental flora, there is **Grow Your Health**, a home gardening, sourcing organic and local food, and nutrition and wellness event that will be held on Saturday, March 5 at Fairfax High School from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. This is a family focused event that includes education and entertainment for children of all ages. The school is located at 3501 Rebel Run, Fairfax. For more information, go to <http://www.growyourhealthnova.com/>.

Sights and Sounds

George Mason University pre-



PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN STEINER
Piano prodigy George Li joins the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra at GMU's Center for the Arts on Saturday, Feb. 6.

sents performances that will entertain, amuse and enlighten. Below are some highlights of the winter season.

*Shhh! At **Mummenschanz**, artists perform in complete silence on a blacked stage with common household objects and simple forms to create ingenious illusions and amusing narratives that provide light-hearted insights on life. The show will be at GMU's Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax on Friday, Feb. 5 at 8 p.m. Tickets are from \$29 to \$48 and are available by calling 703-993-2787 or going to cfa.gmu.edu.

*Be in the presence of greatness when the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra and piano prodigy **George Li** come to GMU's Center for the Arts on Saturday, Feb. 6 at 8 p.m.

Twenty-year-old George Li was a silver medalist in the 2015 International Tchaikovsky Competition and winner of the prestigious XIV Concours International Grand Prix Animato 2014 Paris. He joins the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra as part of their series featuring all of Beethoven's Piano Concertos. The program includes Kernis: Musica Celestis, Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 1 featuring George Li, and Mozart: Symphony No. 41 "Jupiter." Tickets are \$34 to \$58 and can be purchased by calling 703-993-2787 or going to cfa.gmu.edu. GMU's Center for the Arts is at 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax.

*A photojournalist's firsthand reflections while covering war is the subject of the film **"Kandahar Journals."** Filmmaker Louie Palu will hold a question and answer and share his experiences with several Canadian and American regiments in Afghanistan. This free screening on Monday, Feb. 22 will be at 7:30 p.m. at GMU's Johnson Center Cinema, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. For more information, go to <http://fams.gmu.edu/events/5705>.

Finally, "A Touch of Irish" will remind you that spring is almost here. Part of the Bonita Lestina Performance Series at the Old Town Hall—3999 University Drive, Fairfax—The **Woodbridge Flute Choir** has twenty-five members who play flute, piccolo, alto flute, bass flute and contrabass flute. The woodwind extravaganza will be on Friday, March 11 at 8 p.m. For information go to www.fairfaxva.gov.

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NEWS

Chocolate Festival Returns Feb. 6-7

FROM PAGE 4
cations" by Feb. 3.

Grant Recipients

Each year, the Chocolate Lovers Festival Committee donates part of the proceeds raised during the festival to charity. This year's four grant recipients are:

- ❖ **City of Fairfax Police Cops & Kids Day:** It is focused on building stronger relationships between members of the police department and families within the community.

- ❖ **Children and parents watch demonstrations** conducted by the Criminal Investigation Division, Emergency Services Team, K9 Unit, Bike Patrol Unit, and Animal Control Officers.

- ❖ **City of Fairfax Police Kids Safety Saturday:** It is a fun-filled afternoon involving lessons in pedestrian, skateboard and beginner driver-safety awareness for children and parents. Bicycle-cone safety courses led by certified, mountain-bike officers are available, as are bike-safety inspections and minor equipment adjustments.

- ❖ **Fairfax Lions Club:** It has provided services to local people in need, especially those with impaired vision. A recent vision screening at a City of Fairfax school discovered school children with reduced vision, but their parents can't afford corrective glasses



Chocolate Lovers Festival 2016 map.

for them. So the Lions are helping out.

- ❖ **Pets Bring Joy:** Its mission is to provide help and hope to small, grassroots, animal rescuers in Fairfax County and the surrounding area by finding loving, permanent homes for previously at-risk homeless animals in their care. And PBJ's Fuzzies for Seniors program sponsors placement of companion animals with senior citizens.

Chocolate Festival Event Schedule

SATURDAY, FEB. 6

Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast and Bake Sale

8 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Fire Station 3, 4081 University Drive

Join the Kiwanis Club of Fairfax for its Chocolate Lovers Pancake Breakfast. The menu features pancakes (regular and chocolate chip) and sausage. Coffee, juice and milk also will be served.

Face Painting with Sparkle Faces

10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North St.

For all ages, professionally painted on face or arm.

Taste of Chocolate

10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive

Chocolate Challenge and Silent Auction

10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Nutrition Kitchen, 3950 University Drive

Child Fingerprinting

10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Historic Fairfax Court House, 4000 Chain Bridge Road

The Fairfax County Sheriff's Office will offer fingerprinting for children.

Harley Eye Candy Photos

11 a.m.-3 p.m.
City of Fairfax Regional Library front porch, 10360 North St. Sit on a Harley-Davidson motorcycle, courtesy of the Fairfax Harley Owners Group and take photos. (Weather permitting).

The Chocolate Caper Mock Trial

Noon
Historic Fairfax Courthouse, 4000 Chain Bridge Road
The Fairfax Bar Association will hold a mock trial based on a

children's fairytale to explain the justice system to children and adults.

Fire Safety Puppet Show

12:30 p.m.
City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North St.

Enjoy the City of Fairfax Fire Department's singing puppets as they teach children important fire-safety lessons.

So You Think You're Smarter Than a Lawyer?

1 p.m.
Historic Fairfax Courthouse, 4000 Chain Bridge Road

Play a legal game against a lawyer.

Chocolate-Dipped Tales

2 p.m.
City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North St.

Kaydee Puppets present a show for children.

The Chocolate Caper Mock Trial

2:30 p.m.
Historic Fairfax Courthouse, 4000 Chain Bridge Road
The Fairfax Bar Association will hold a mock trial based on a children's fairytale to explain the justice system to children and adults.

Be Our Valentine: Music with Cody & BJ

3:30 p.m.
City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North St.
Enjoy music with Cody & BJ! Co-sponsored by Friends of the City of Fairfax Regional Library.

Chocolate and a Movie

The original version of "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory," featuring Gene Wilder, will be shown at 7 p.m. at the Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Old Lee Highway. Attendees will receive a "golden" ticket; a drawing will be held at intermission and the winning ticket will receive a mini iPad.

Popcorn and an ice-cream-sundae bar are included in the fun. Admission is \$5/person.

Pre-registration is requested by Feb. 4.

Only a limited amount of walk-ins will be allowed. For more information and registration, visit www.chocolatefestival.net and click on the Website in the "Chocolate and a Movie" section under the Events tab. Sponsored by 29 Diner and Twins Ace Hardware.

SUNDAY, FEB. 7

Taste of Chocolate

Noon-4 p.m.
Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive

Chocolate Challenge and Silent Auction

Noon-4 p.m.
Nutrition Kitchen, 3950 University Drive

Construct a Cupcake

Noon-4 p.m.
Twins Ace Hardware, 10310 Main St.
Complimentary cupcakes to decorate and eat; open to all ages.

Fire Safety Puppet Show

12:30 p.m.
City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North St.

Enjoy the City of Fairfax Fire Department's singing puppets as they teach children important fire-safety lessons.

"Chocolate-Covered Fairytales"

2 p.m.
City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North St.
Award-winning storyteller Gary Lloyd tells classic fairytales with a chocolate twist.

Jonathan Austin - Magic & Juggling

3:30 p.m.
City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North St.

Austin's personality, hilarious sense of humor, timing and skill combine to provide a must-see show for children and adults.

Pottery by Ede Walker

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CALENDAR



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Celebrate the Year of the Monkey with the New World Bilingual Institute on Sunday, Feb. 7 at George Mason University.

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

THURSDAY-SUNDAY/JAN. 28-31

"Beauty and the Beast." Check for times. Lake Braddock Secondary School, 9200 Burke Lake Road, Burke. Bring the family to enjoy the "tale as old as time" told first as a Disney cartoon musical and then became a smash hit on Broadway. \$12. <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2478480>.

SATURDAY/JAN. 30

Polish Baltic Philharmonic Orchestra. 8 p.m. GMU Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. This distinguished ensemble from the historic port city of GdaDsk on the coast of the Baltic Sea brings a splendid evening of classical music favorites. \$30-\$50. cfa.gmu.edu.

Art and Lunch. Noon-3 p.m. The Village Gallery, 3950 University Drive, Fairfax. Bring lunch and enjoy the company of other artists and learn something new. New members welcome. Free. www.fairfaxartleague.net, or call at 703 587-9481.

SUNDAY/JAN. 31

Hands On Activities Day. 1-4 p.m. Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Crafts, train scenery modeling and other hands-on activities may be among the activities featured that day. Free-\$4. www.fairfax-station.org. 703-425-9225.

American Youth Philharmonic. 3 p.m. GMU Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. Repertoire includes Rossini's William Tell Overture, Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante, and Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony. Free-\$20. cfa.gmu.edu.

Burke Historical Society Meeting. 4:30 p.m. Fellowship Hall, Abiding Presence Lutheran Church, 6304 Lee Chapel Road, Burke. BHS member Mary Lipsey will give a presentation entitled, "This Old House." The meeting will begin with some business and a "State of the Society" address.

Fun with Roses. 2-4 p.m. Merrifield Garden Center-Fair Oaks, 12101 Lee Highway, Fairfax. Enjoy an Interactive demonstration of design secrets for romantic and friendship inspired rose creations. Refreshments. 703-371-9351.

Charity Fun Run. 8-11 a.m. Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Help cure cancer and stay fit! Join the 5k "Red Run" fun run organized to benefit the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. \$25.

Information and registration at <http://tinyurl.com/LLSFUNRUN>.

Jessica Fechter. 4:15 p.m. GMU, Nutrition Kitchen, 3950 University Drive, Fairfax. Author of "Stir: My Broken Brain and the Meals That Brought Me Home." \$8-\$12. 703-537-3000. jccnavarts.org.

Burke Historical Society. 4:30 p.m. Abiding Presence Lutheran Church, 6304 Lee Chapel Road, Burke. Have you ever wanted to learn the stories behind some of our longstanding local residences? Perhaps there are some you don't even know about, or that no longer exist. In "This Old House," Mary Lipsey will give a virtual tour of the most historic homes of the Burke and Annandale areas, with Mount Vernon included for good measure. 703-451-2047.

FRIDAY/FEB. 5

Mummenschanz. 8 p.m. GMU Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. These unique artists perform in complete silence on a blackened stage with common household objects and simple forms to create ingenious illusions and amusing narratives that provide light-hearted insights on life. \$29-\$48. cfa.gmu.edu.

SATURDAY/FEB. 6

Broadway Miracles and Madcap Comedy. 8 p.m. GMU Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. Two spectacular troupes team up for a special benefit performance celebrating Mason's exciting new Musical Theater program. \$10-\$15. cfa.gmu.edu.

Fairfax Symphony Orchestra, George Li, Piano. 8 p.m. GMU Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. Award-winning pianist. \$34-\$58. cfa.gmu.edu.

The Sometimes CD Release. 8-11:30 p.m. Dogfish Head Alehouse, 13041 Lee Jackson Memorial Highway, Fairfax. The Fairfax based band Sometimes celebrates their CD release with live music and food. Free and open to the public. <http://www.thesometimesrocks.com>.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/FEB. 6-7

13th Annual Lunar New Year Festival. 1-5 p.m. Fair Oaks Mall, 11750 Fair Oaks Mall, Fairfax. Presented by the Washington Hai Hua Community Center, the event is one of the largest of its kind with free performances, ceremonies and exhibitions. <http://www.shopfairoaksmall.com/events>.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 15

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Seminars run from 10am-12pm. Lunch to follow.
Please arrive at 9:45am for check-in.

Seating is limited!

RSVP: info@sundesigninc.com or call Erin at
703.425.5588

SPORTS

LB's Jones Had First Snow Driving Experience

Lake Braddock senior Caroline Jones, a two-time second-team all-region catcher, will play softball at Villanova University.

Q: In what city do you live?

A: Fairfax Station.

Q: How did the amount of snowfall in your neighborhood compare to what you thought would fall?

A: I am always the person that underestimates how much snowfall we are actually going to get, so I guess it didn't really register with me that we had a blizzard coming and that we were going to be getting this much snow. I was expecting around a foot or so, but when it kept snowing and I watched it pile up on my back deck, I knew I was way off on how much we were actually going to get.

Q: What, if any, preparations did you and your family make for the storm?

A: My family went to the gas station and filled up all of our cars and got gas for the snow blower as well. Also, my mom went to the grocery store and bought the necessities, while also stocking up on my favorites: Dr. Pepper, oatmeal and bananas.

Q: What did you do to pass the time during the storm?

A: To pass the time during the snowstorm I spent most of my time on homework as I had a government project that had to be submitted electronically on Monday. But when I wasn't doing homework, I was helping to clear off my driveway of all the snow and spending time with my family.

Q: Did you play in the snow? If so, what did you do?

A: I did play in the snow! I have two elementary-aged kids that live across the street from me, so I went sledding with them down my street, made snow angels, and had a snowball fight. One of my favorite parts of a snowstorm is when it is over and all the neighbors are outside clearing off their driveways. It is so great to see everyone coming together to help one another and to catch up with people you haven't talked to in a while.

Q: Were you able to exercise/practice during the storm? If so, what did you do?

A: The Wednesday before the blizzard hit, about 1 inch of snow fell and I was at practice out past Dulles Airport when that started falling. So it took me about 2 1/2 hours to get home that night and that was the first time I had ever driven in snow before, so that



PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

Lake Braddock catcher Caroline Jones is signed to play softball at Villanova University.

Snowstorm Q&A

A snowstorm caused Fairfax County Public Schools to cancel classes and athletic events from Thursday, Jan. 21 through Wednesday, Jan. 27. Some areas received more than 20 inches of snow during the weekend, according to the National Weather Service, creating a break from competition for local high school athletes. Some of them shared their storm experience via email Q&A with The Connection.

was definitely an adventure I will never forget. When the blizzard hit I was limited on what I could do as far as softball goes because I don't have a place inside my house that I could throw or hit. But once my driveway was clear, I was back outside doing tee work and preparing for the spring season.

Q: Do you play a winter sport at Lake Braddock? If not, are you preparing for the softball season?

A: I played varsity basketball for Lake Braddock my freshman and sophomore year, but decided junior year that I was going to focus all my efforts on softball. I am very excited about this spring season and am working hard to be the best teammate and player I can be. I have spent a lot of time in the cages this winter working on my swing and also am working to develop my outfield skills as well. When I'm not training, I go to Zumba to have fun and keep my cardio up. I know all the girls on the Lake Braddock team have worked extremely hard this offseason and we are excited to take the field together this spring and compete for a championship.

— JON ROETMAN

SPORTS ROUNDUPS

Looking for Umpires

Northern Virginia Baseball Umpires Association is in need of umpires for youth leagues, high schools, and collegiate-level baseball and volleyball games. Experience is helpful, but not required. Will give classroom and field training to aid you in acquiring skills needed. Contact John Porter at 703-978-3601 or assignor@umpires.org.

Potomac Field Hockey Registration

Registration is now open for Potomac Field Hockey's spring FUNdamental program for Pre-K through second grade and Youth Rec league program

for grades 3-8. No experience necessary. Once-weekly team practices with games on Saturdays. Technical skills sessions included. Season begins March 28 and runs through June 4. For more information or to register, visit www.potomacfieldhockey.org or email info@potomacfieldhockey.org.

Field Hockey Coaches, Umpires Needed

Coaches and umpires are needed for our upcoming spring season. Umpires needed for youth games on Saturdays. Send coach inquiry to info@potomacfieldhockey.org; send umpire inquiry to umpire@potomacfieldhockey.org.



PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

Senior guard Seamus Maloney and the Woodson boys' basketball team will look to snap a three-game losing skid when games resume following the recent snowstorm.

Woodson's Maloney Went Sledding

Woodson senior guard Seamus Maloney who scored 14 points in an overtime loss to T.C. Williams on Jan. 19.

Q: In what city do you live?

A: Fairfax.

Q: How did the amount of snowfall in your neighborhood compare to what you thought would fall?

A: It was more than I expected.

Q: What, if any, preparations did you and your family make for the storm?

A: We stacked up on food and made sure we were shoveling every few hours so the snow didn't build up.

Q: What did you do to pass the time during the storm?

A: I went sledding a decent amount with some of my teammates and friends. That was pretty fun.

Q: Were you able to exercise/practice during the storm? If so, what did you do?

A: My friends and I got shots up Friday night when the storm began. For the next few days I couldn't get to a gym so I just

lifted and worked on my handles in my basement. On Sunday I got shots up with my friend Andrew Dinh and Matt Ayoub at Matt's house.

Q: Are you interested in playing college basketball? What are your college plans?

A: I'm talking to a few schools right now but I'm not 100 percent sure what I want to do yet.

Q: This is your first season as a varsity starter, correct? What has the transition been like moving from reserve to starter?

A: I've had to take more of a leadership role this year. Last year I was solely a role player, but this year I've had to become more of a scorer and distributor on the court.

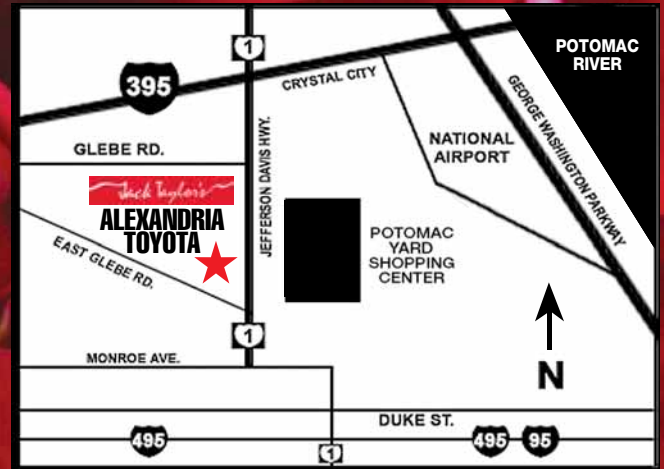
Q: What will it take for the team to come back strong after the storm layoff?

A: We've got to be ready to play right when we get back because we will probably have back-to-back games next week. Most of the guys have been working out too so we should be ready.

— JON ROETMAN

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21 Announcements

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NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 dates from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200


21 Announcements

ABC NOTICE
MWB Development II, LLC trading as World of Beer, 11861 Palace Way, Fairfax Virginia 22030 is applying to the Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control for Mixed Beverage on Premise AND Wine & Beer On & Off Premises and Keg license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Evan Matz, Managing Member NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at <http://www.abc.virginia.gov> or 800-552-3200.

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- Ralph Waldo
Emerson

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THURSDAY/JAN. 28

Aldi Hiring Event. 7 a.m.-5 p.m. Aldi, 11001 Lee Highway, Fairfax. Openings for store associate, manager trainee and shift manager. <http://aldistorejobs.com/how-to-apply>.

THURSDAYS/JAN. 28-MARCH 3

Job Seekers Seminar. 7-8:30 p.m. Immanuel Bible Church, 6991 Braddock Road, Springfield. Looking for a job? Are you confident on how to search for one? IBC's Job Seeker Seminar will equip attendees with the knowledge necessary. \$15. 703-220-5165. <http://immanuelbible.net/stewardship/job-seekers>.

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. 703-830-3175.

SUNDAY/JAN. 31

Human Trafficking: Get the Facts and Take Action. Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. <http://www.fairfaxva.gov/host/women/events.html>.

MONDAY/FEB. 1

Vision Boards: Intentional Body Mapping. 5-6 p.m. Green Acres Center, 4401 Sideburn Road, Fairfax. Create intentions of what you would like to draw into your life. Ages 16 and up. \$20. 703-359-2487. 312-988-2254.

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE II

SUNDAY/FEB. 7

NWBI 2016 Chinese New Year Celebrations. 1-4 p.m. Johnson Center Dewberry Hall, George Mason University, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Dragon dance, dumpling cooking lesson, riddles, Chinese painting. \$2-\$6. nwbuis@yahoo.com.

Astronomy Campfire. 6 p.m. Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Enjoy a campfire and learn what ancient cultures saw in the stars. Make s'mores over the embers after hearing tales of the constellations. Children must be accompanied by an adult registered in the program. \$8. <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/burkelakepark/rides.htm>.

TUESDAY/FEB. 9

Mardi Gras 2016. Doors open at noon. Fat Tuesday's, 10673 Braddock Road, Fairfax. Nine bands beginning at 3 p.m. Special Mardi Gras menu. <http://www.fatsfairfax.com/>.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 10

"She's Beautiful When She's Angry." 7:30-9:30 p.m. W-3 Theatre, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. A documentary film that resurrects the buried history of the outrageous, often brilliant women, who founded the modern women's movement from 1966 to 1971. www.workhousearts.org. 703-584-2900.

Luncheon Springfield Christian Women's Connection. 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Springfield Golf and Country Club, 8301 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. Maria Delmy Vialpando, a CPR and First Aid instructor, from Healthy Happy Heart CPR, LLC, will demonstrate how an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) can help activate the

TUESDAY/FEB. 2

St. John's Center for Early Childhood Education. 5312 Backlick Road, Springfield. CECE is taking registrations. They offer preschool classes. 703-256-7748. CECE@saintjohnsumc.org.

SUNDAY/FEB. 14

Seventh Annual Valentine Blood Drive. 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Woods Community Center, 10100 Wards Grove Circle, Burke. The blood drive will include a bake sale to benefit The Truth 365, an organization dedicated to raising awareness and funds for pediatric cancer research. Appointments are available now by contacting Inova Blood Donor Services at 1-866-BLOODSAVES (1-866-256-6372), sponsor code 7637. Free childcare is available during your appointment. Visit www.friendsofsadie.org for more information.

SATURDAY/APRIL 2

Breathe Out. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Fairfax United Methodist Church, 10300 Stratford Ave., Fairfax. Breathe Out has been developed to address teen stress. Registration required. breatheoutnow.wix.com/goldaward.

ONGOING

Burke Rotary Club Meeting. Tuesdays from 7:15-8:30 a.m. Anita's Restaurant, 9278 Old Keene Mill Road, Burke. Meetings with breakfast and program. www.burkerotary.org.

Burke Lake Seniors Golf League seeks members. Interested golfers are invited to join the Burke Lake Seniors Golf League. Must be 55 and older, enjoy playing golf, meeting new people and having an all-around good time. Reserved tee times on Tuesday and Thursday mornings at the Par 3 Burke Lake Golf Course on Ox Road. Annual dues for the season - April 1 through October 31 - are \$20 plus green fees. For more information, call Charlie Ryan 703-690-4227.

heart of a loved one. Learn about the life-saving advantages provided by and AED. Reserve by Friday, Feb. 5. 703-922-6438. SpringWmConn@yahoo.com.

THURSDAY/FEB. 11

Art and Lunch. 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Old Town Hall, Second Floor, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Bring lunch and enjoy the company of other artists. There will be a group critique. For more information contact Kathleen Stark at knstark72@gmail.com, or call 703 569-8760. Free. New members welcome. www.fairfaxartleague.net. 703 587-9481.

Art Reception. 7-9 p.m. 3999 University Drive, Second Floor, Fairfax. Come enjoy refreshments, meet the artists and be a part of your local artist community. New members welcome. www.fairfaxartleague.net. 703 587-9481.

FRIDAY/FEB. 12

Old Town Hall Performance Series-U.S. Navy Country Current. 8 p.m. Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. The United States Navy Band Country Current is the Navy's premiere country-bluegrass ensemble. Under the direction of Senior Chief Musician Keith Arneson, Country Current is nationally renowned for its versatility and "eye-popping" musicianship, performing a blend of modern country music and cutting-edge bluegrass.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/FEB. 13-14

"Romeo and Juliet." Saturday, 8 p.m. Sunday, 2 p.m. George Mason University Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. Director Bernard Uzan and conductor James Meena leads a cast of internationally renowned singers. A Virginia Opera production. \$48-\$98. cfa.gmu.edu. 888-945-2468.

Positive 2015 Real Estate Market Spurs Upbeat Outlook for the New Year

Experts predict continuing positive trend.

BY ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

The final figures are in, and it looks like the 2015 local housing market was a modest winner. Coming off a banner 2013, the 2014 market left buyers, sellers, agents, brokers and lenders all feeling a bit edgy when the previous year's successes did not spill over into the next year. But despite a bit of a rollercoaster ride, 2015 closed with annual regional sales 9.4 percent higher than 2014 – their highest since 2006. Data for the region, that includes the general Metro area, as well as specifics for Fairfax and Arlington counties, the cities of Fairfax, Falls Church and Alexandria, and the towns of Herndon, Vienna and Clifton is supplied by RealEstate Business Intelligence, L.L.C. (RBI), an arm of the local MLS system.

In the first half of the year the normal buying pattern was disrupted by a number of factors, not the least being the long and difficult winter which pushed the start of the spring market from late January or February to mid-March.

"The hottest real estate season lost a solid month of sales," said Reston-based Keller Williams agent Andy Krumholz. "Then it ended earlier than normal, as well," he added.

"Normally lasting until late June before the summer slowdown, this past year the market went to sleep in May and stayed that way through Labor Day."

TO EVERYONE'S RELIEF, the second half of the year saw a real pick up in real estate action. Virgil Frizzell, the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors (NVAR) chairman of the board noted "a strong fall market and sometimes a flurry of bidding wars" that helped overcome the slow start, even with the jitters that came as the world waited for the anticipated increase in the Fed Funds Rate by the Federal Reserve, and the adjustments to be made as new closing laws went into effect.

According to the RBI data, Fairfax County had the most closed sales in 2015, increasing 9.6 percent over 2014. Alexandria came in with a 9.4 percent increase, Fairfax City with 7.9 percent, Arlington with 3.9 percent and Falls Church with 3.8 percent.

Among the jurisdictions, Fairfax County also saw the highest increase in new listings, up 14.6 percent over the previous year, a trend that Anita Lasansky, CRB, managing broker-vice president Long and Foster Realtors in North Reston can attest to. "We're a 60 percent/40 percent listing versus sales organization and it was a brisk year for us," she said, although at the moment "there's not a lot of inventory." Chairman



Andy Krumholz, Agent Keller Williams Reston: "The improving economic metrics have many pundits feeling optimistic about 2016. I expect

most areas to experience a 3-4 percent price improvement."

Frizzell agrees that "our region could always benefit from affordably priced new homes that will help our renter population make the move to home ownership."

In terms of sales pricing, Lasansky's opinion is that it was an almost neutral market year. "Buyers couldn't 'steal' a house, but sellers couldn't easily sell a property not in good condition.

There was quite a bit of negotiating during many of the transactions." Krumholz agreed with that assessment. "Even as inventory increased and some sellers were adjusting their sales price expectations, buyers were remaining selective. Homes that needed repairs or improvements languished on the market."



Anita Lasansky, CRB managing broker-vice president, Long and Foster North Reston: "The current stock market fluctuations could

be a good thing for the local real estate market. Housing is looking like a pretty good bet."

The RBI numbers show that both Lasansky and Krumholz were right in their thoughts about pricing and the average days on the market (DOM) of a given property. The region saw only a 1.1 percent increase in the median sales price. Behind D.C., Arlington County and Alexandria City led the way, with increases over 4 percent. In Fairfax County median sales prices were 3.2 percent higher in 2015 than in 2014. Only Falls Church saw a year-over-year decrease, dropping 1.4 percent, but keeping the "most expensive location crown" among the Northern Virginia locales with a 2015 median sales price of \$690,000. At 22, days on the market increased slightly for all of the areas analyzed, but even those increases



Virgil Frizzell, Chairman of the Board Northern Virginia Association of Realtors: "The 2016 market is a dynamic situation, but I think all the indicators are there for a positive year."

did not depress the overall sense of market health, since the two-day increase in the median DOM from 2014 is still an impressive 41 days less than the DOM high of 68 in 2008, and not far off the lowest DOM level recorded in the past decade of 15 days in 2013.

SO WHAT DO THE EXPERTS take from this plethora of information as they look to the 2016 market? NVAR CEO Ryan T. Conrad believes the positive trends will continue throughout the year.

"Our region's sales pace last year reflected that there was homebuyer confidence," he stated in a recent NVAR press release, and "serious homebuyers will understand that their buying power will be strongest in the early part of the year" considering further expected rate hikes from the Federal Reserve.

Lasansky, with her 40 years of local experience, is looking at 2016 to be "as good, if not better, than 2015." Asked if she saw the current Wall Street woes as a challenge to the market, she replied the effect might just be the opposite. "With interest rates still so low, the volatility of the stock market might just steer people more toward real estate as the safer bet." Lasansky also feels that the recent easing of some of the regulations and requirements could make homebuying more of a possibility, especially for younger and first-time buyers.

Frizzell is equally positive about the 2016 outlook. "Millennials are starting to make the move," he stated. Several of his rental clients are now on the hunt for homes of their own.

Armed with the RBI data, his own expertise, and encouraging information provided from the George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis, Frizzell thinks that continued employment growth and a more balanced economy in the region might make 2016 "one of the best years ever."

Links to data and analysis by locale can be found on the NVAR website, www.nvar.com. Readers interested in comprehensive data on the region including housing, job growth by sector and wages and more, can visit the George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis website at www.cra.gmu.edu.



FACETS Provides Warmth and a Warm Meal

Guests enjoy warmth and a warm meal at a hypothermia shelter operated by Fairfax-based nonprofit FACETS during Winter Storm Jonas.