

Springfield CONNECTION

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Newington

Inside COMMUNITY OUTLOOK & WINTER FUN GUIDE

Snow Place Like Home

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Bereft of a pool that is open, Caroline Wittich of Springfield, also a member of the West Springfield Spartan Swim and Dive team, works on her start.

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COUNTRY LIVING & CITY LIFE

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Bayard Breen of Springfield takes a break from helping dig out multiple driveways to enjoy the snow cave he worked on with his brothers Nigel and Cedric, and friend Kyle.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Crowds flocked to the hill at Washington Irving Middle School in Springfield to sled in the aftermath of Winter Storm Jonas.

Snow Place Like Home

Residents, volunteers come together to dig out after Jonas drops over 20 inches.

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

Compared to Wednesday night's sneak-attack dusting that caught Virginia Department of Transportation crews unprepared and commuters stuck in hours of slick rush hour gridlock, Fairfax County Supervisors think the full force of Winter Storm Jonas was weathered about as well as possible.

For one thing, projections of the snow beginning in earnest around 3 p.m. Friday and continuing, mostly uninterrupted until Sunday morning while depositing nearly two feet of the white stuff, were pretty spot-on.

"This is one of the first I remember where they got the projections basically right," said Supervisor Dan Storck (D-Mount Vernon). "Timing and everything else was basically as projected. That was really very helpful for all of us to be able to respond."

Storck said he was pleased to hear of "only a fluttering of power outages" compared to the extended lack of power that accompanied the "Snowmageddon" storm of 2010. "That's absolutely the best news," he said.

After receiving reports about lack of plowing service that he then relayed to VDOT, Storck made a few house calls Tuesday to see if crews had responded.

Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) said as many as 200 people in Chantilly and Centreville lost power during the storm, but that it was restored in a short period of time.

GIVEN THE VOLUME of snow that fell, Herrity said he was generally positive on the job VDOT did digging out Fairfax County.



Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) borrowed the snowblower of his Little Rocky Run neighbor Cheryl Tweedie Belloli to help dig out others in the neighborhood.

"This was clearly a big improvement over the dusting we had Wednesday night," he said.

Herrity himself got behind a neighbor's snow-blower and worked with neighbors in Little Rocky Run to clear a number of driveways and sidewalks for people who either weren't home or had difficulty digging out themselves.

"The happiest thing I've seen, everywhere I've gone, is everyone out helping everyone, just a lot of neighbors helping neighbors," said Herrity. "It's always a good thing when people can come together and help other folks."

Elsewhere in the county, numerous nonprofit organizations, Fairfax County staff and faith communities helped homeless individuals weather the storm, bringing them in from the cold.



Supervisor Jeff McKay's (D-Lee) children Leann (left) and Aidan (right) aren't in any hurry to return to school.

Margi Preston, executive director of the Fairfax-based nonprofit FACETS, said her organization and volunteers at two different faith communities served more than 77 people during the storm.

"The volunteers from both St. Mary's and St. John Neumann were amazing and took excellent care of our hypothermia program participants," Preston said in an email.

Normally, their hypothermia shelter would only be available overnight, one night at a time. For Winter Storm Jonas, FACETS extended the hours.

"There was enough food, planned activities and things to do to keep people entertained for the duration of the storm," said Preston. FACETS shelters were open from 3 p.m. Friday until closing Tuesday morning at 8:30 a.m. They opened back up at 2 p.m. Tuesday and transitioned to new faith

communities Monday afternoon.

"This is a lifesaving service that's a true community-wide effort to address the critical needs of those individuals experiencing homelessness in Fairfax County. The health and safety of these individuals is always our number one concern and we're grateful to have such amazing partners to enable our community to come together for the greater good of our neighbors in need."

DEAN KLEIN, director of the Fairfax County Office to Prevent and End Homelessness, said volunteers and staff from 55 faith communities, FACETS and other nonprofits including Cornerstones in Reston, Northern Virginia Family Service in Falls Church and New Hope Housing Inc. in Mount Vernon "really went above and beyond to ensure homeless individuals were safe."

Klein said staffs at shelters were very well prepared and scheduled experienced individuals who would be able to manage spending several days in close quarters with homeless guests and engage with them in a meaningful way.

"This took a different level of commitment," said Klein. "It was so impressive to see people coming together during this type of storm."

"It's a reminder when you see so many in need of more permanent housing solutions that it's important to push for more affordable, safe housing options," Klein added. "We still have people living in the woods who had to come in from the cold. They need opportunities to allow them to be independent."

Anyone without at least one "passable" lane for traffic in their neighborhood by 6 a.m. Wednesday morning, Jan. 27, can report to VDOT at 1-800-FOR-ROAD or email novainfo@vdot.virginia.gov.

Neighborhood Development Outlook Update

BY TIM PETERSON

1 Bonefish Grille parking lot area

5920 Kingstowne Town Center, Alexandria

The Bonefish Grille parking lot area has been approved for the construction of four office structures, but will require an approved request for rezoning to make way for ground-level retail buildings with residential space above. A presentation to the Fairfax County Land Use Committee is expected in the next two months.

2 Corbet Manor subdivision

Around 7717 Gambrill Road

Seven single-family homes are going into 4.5 acres of what were previously unconsolidated parcels of land. The project has been approved and construction is pending.

3 Corridor study of Van Dorn

Street From Kingstowne to Alexandria city

Supervisor Jeff McKay (D-Lee) is interested in tapping into an Alexandria study of the corridor, extending it to Kingstowne and potentially bringing a bus rapid transit system to Van Dorn. The County is working with Alexandria to make sure the stretch is part of the conversation.

4 GSA Warehouse 6808 Loisdale

Road, Building A

The large warehouse off Loisdale Road in Springfield continues to be a candidate for home of the new headquarters of the FBI. The building, owned by the General Services Administration (GSA) is competing with sites in Greenbelt and Landover for the highly coveted candidate. Environmental impact statements for the three sites have been completed and the final contract is scheduled to be awarded around fall 2016.

5 Keene Mill Elementary School Renovation

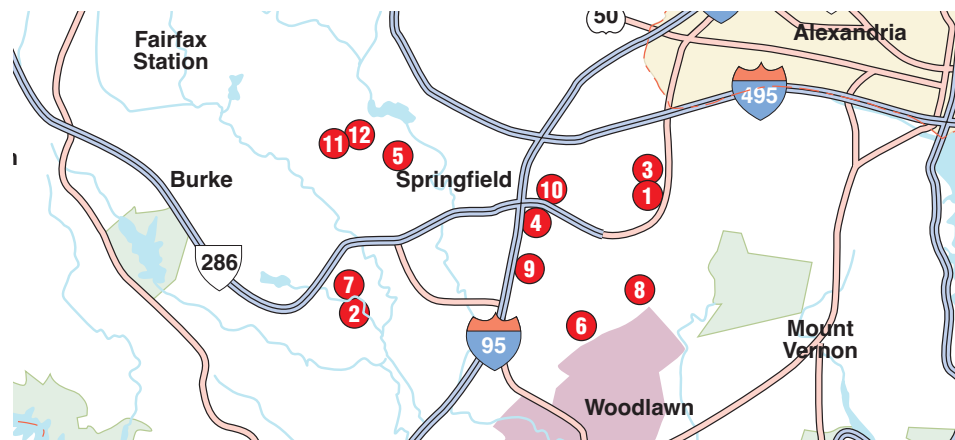
6310 Bardu Ave

An 18-month renovation of the school includes a two-story addition on the left side of the building in the rear, an addition for administration in the front and an addition for a cafe-kitchen in the rear on the right side. The project is estimated to be finished by summer 2016.

6 Liberty View

13.45-acre site near Beulah Street and the Fairfax County Parkway

This was approved for single family home neighborhoods, four office buildings and fifth structure that would be either a hotel or office building. It was rezoned in 2011 and previous structures have been demolished.



The vast underground arcade and restaurant Dave & Buster's opened at Springfield Town Center the week of Christmas 2015.



7 Park Pointe subdivision

East side of Gambrill Road, near the Fairfax County Pkwy

Development has started on 18 single-family homes spread across 7.7 acres. Paving should be taking place this spring, weather-permitting.

8 Piney Run by Elm Street Development

Area of Telegraph Road and Piney Run Drive, Alexandria

Demolition of the Hill Top Golf facility is set to begin soon, making way for a 259-unit residential development specifically for individuals 55 and older. When completed, the development should include 32 single family units, 103 townhouses and 124 multi-family condominiums and apartments.

9 Safford Car Dealerships on Loisdale

Loisdale Road

Following the 2015 opening of Jennings Toyota at 7601 Loisdale and a new artificial turf field at Loisdale Park, Safford Hyundai is scheduled to open in the first quarter of 2016 with Safford Chrysler/Jeep/Dodge/Ram set to follow in the second quarter of 2016.

10 Springfield Town Center

6500 Springfield Mall

Since January 2015, another 30 shops and restaurants occupying 87,000 square-feet have joined the 1.35 million square-foot retail space of Springfield Town Center, according to owner Pennsylvania Real Estate Investment Trust. Some of the newest tenants include Nordstrom Rack, Francesca's, Finish Line, New York and Co., Wood Ranch BBQ and Grill and Dave and Buster's, which opened Dec. 21, 2015. The renovated shopping destination reopened in October 2014 after years of decline as the Springfield Mall. Later stages of redevelopment planning for the area include residential, office and hotel space. But their execution will be dictated by market performance of the Springfield Town Center market. A release from PREIT said another 73,000 square-feet of space is already committed for 2016.

11 U-Haul Warehouse

5285 Port Royal Road

U-Haul is repurposing a previously vacant personal storage facility for a truck rental business. The Board of Supervisors approved amending the zoning ordinance and special exception application in its June 23 meeting. All permits have been granted and construction is underway.

12 West Springfield High School

6100 Rolling Road

Renovation construction is scheduled to begin in May 2016 and take three and a half to four years to complete, according to Fairfax County Public Schools Design and Construction Capital Projects Coordinator Brady Rauch. The renovation will include upgrades to windows, flooring, HVAC, power and lighting of the current structure, and additions for music, science, library and administration. Cost is estimated in the Capital Improvement Program at \$82,958,090.

Sources: Supervisor Jeff McKay (D-Lee) and land use aide, Supervisor Pat Herry (R-Springfield) and land use aide, Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock) and land use aide.

WINTER ENTERTAINMENT AND FUN GUIDE



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.

Paradise for Chocolate Lovers

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

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 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



Chocolate Lovers Festival 2016 map.

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 "applications" 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 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.

'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.

Please tell us a little bit about your creature, identify everyone in the photo, give a brief description what is happening in the photo, and include address and phone number (we will not publish your address or phone number, just your town name).

Email to south@connectionnewspapers.com or online at www.connectionnewspapers.com/pets.

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BLIZZARD 2016



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Elise Roberts, 16, of Springfield enjoys a snow day in a beautiful way.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Supervisor Jeff McKay's (D-Lee) daughter Leann lends a hand clearing the family's driveway.

Sure-footed Silvia Murphy, of Springfield, shovels snow off the roof of her Springfield home, almost losing her shovel at one point.

PHOTO BY
ABIGAIL
CONSTANTINO
THE CONNECTION



PHOTO BY MARISSA BEALE/THE CONNECTION

Springfield residents Ally Lother, Maddie Lother and Briana Beale jump for joy in the snow on Forrester Boulevard.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Regina Paik of Springfield shares a photo of her dog Mr. Digby playing in the snow.

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West Springfield Gymnasts Win West Potomac Meet

PHOTO BY RICHARD MAPLE

The West Springfield gymnastics team won a meet at West Potomac High School on Jan. 20, producing a score of 133.675. Spartan gymnast Abbie Levine placed second in the all-around with a total of 36.075. She won floor (9.45) and bars (9.025), took second on beam (9) and finished fourth on vault (8.6). Team-mate Alex Marsden took second on vault (9.2). The Conference 7 meet is scheduled for 6 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 4 at West Potomac.

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.

Field Hockey Open House

Learn more about field hockey. Potomac Field Hockey will be holding open houses on March 1 and March 3 from 5-7 p.m. Drop in any time. Equipment provided. For more information and to RSVP, visit www.potomacfieldhockey.org.

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 registered 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



PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN STEINER

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

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 nwbis@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 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 Reception, 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.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAMI MUSIC

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

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 presents 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 blackened 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.

FEB 6TH

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COMMUNITY

Artwork from the Springfield Art Guild hangs at Crestwood Elementary School during the Jan. 19 meeting of the Springfield Civic Association.

PHOTOS BY
STEVE HIBBARD/
THE CONNECTION



Springfield Art Guild Speaks at Civic Association

The Springfield Art Guild (SAG) made a presentation about all of its many offerings to the Springfield Civic Association at its Tuesday, Jan. 19 meeting at Crestwood Elementary School. Showing a display of artwork by SAG artists, acting president Lydia Jechoreck gave a PowerPoint presentation of the 47-year-old guild. For anyone who has an interest in art, the nonprofit guild meets at the Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce Street, Springfield, and is open to both hobbyists and professional artists. That includes any of the 100 artists who specialize in paintings, murals, photography, watercolor, mixed media, film, sculpture, ceramics, fashion design, pottery and other media, including one artist who paints on a rock. The guild sponsors three to four shows a year and has guest speakers who give presentations every second Wednesday of the month, starting at 6 p.m., at the library. They also publish a monthly newsletter with art tips, offer art classes and fund scholarships for students in the local community. Membership is \$25/year.

"The art guild is for anyone with an interest in art. It's a group that if you came in, you are welcome,"



SAG Acting President Lydia Jechoreck shows off her original art work.

said Jechoreck. "It's a great, friendly group and artists are quick to share their art. There's also a lot of learning curve to the business side of art."

She added, "We want to let other artists in the area know that we are a very diverse group with different backgrounds. We want to get our names out to other artists in the area."

The website is www.Springfieldartguild.org and it includes an online gallery, Artists of the Month, and new members "spotlighted."

— STEVE HIBBARD



Members of the Springfield Art Guild stand in front of samples of their artwork at the meeting of the Springfield Civic Association on Jan. 19.

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, Fairfax. This distinguished ensemble from the historic port city of Gdansk on the coast of the Baltic Sea brings a splendid evening of classical music favorites. \$30-\$50. www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2478480.

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.

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 Gdansk on the coast of the Baltic Sea brings a splendid evening of classical music favorites. \$30-\$50. cfa.gmu.edu.

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.

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.

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. jccnarts.org.

Burke Historical Society. 4:30 p.m. Abiding Presence Lutheran Church, 6304 Lee Chapel Road,

SATURDAY/FEB. 6

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.shopfairfaxmall.com/events>.

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. nwbis@yahoo.com.

Astronomy Campfire. 6 p.m.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 15

NEWS

Discarded smoking materials caused a fire Sunday morning at a Springfield Home on Roundabout Way.

PHOTO COURTESY OF
FAIRFAX COUNTY FIRE AND
RESCUE DEPARTMENT



Smoking Materials Cause Accidental House Fire in Springfield

Thrown out smoking materials caused a fire in a Springfield home the morning of Sunday, Jan. 24.

The materials had been improperly discarded in the master bathroom of the second floor, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue said. Investigators determined the fire was accidental.

Both occupants of the home escaped safely after one of them discovered the fire. They are being supported by the Red Cross.

Firefighters were able to extinguish the flames and damage is estimated at \$163,750.

The Fire and Rescue Department offered these additional tips for discarding smoking materials:

- ❖ Completely douse butts and ashes with water before throwing them away, as they can smolder and cause a fire.
- ❖ Never smoke in bed.

- ❖ Provide large, deep ashtrays with a center support for smokers. Check furniture for any dropped ashes before going to bed. Empty ashes into a fireproof container with water and sand.

- ❖ Keep smoking materials away from anything that can burn, such as mattresses, bedding, upholstered furniture, draperies, etc.).

- ❖ Never smoke in a home where oxygen is being used.

- ❖ If you smoke, choose fire-safe cigarettes. They are less likely to cause fires.

- ❖ To prevent a deadly cigarette fire, you must be alert. You won't be if you are sleepy, have been drinking, or have taken medicine or other drugs.

- ❖ Keep matches and lighters up high, out of children's sight and reach.

—TIM PETERSON

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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, Dining & Gifts I

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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

PHOTO BY LOUISE KRAFFT/THE CONNECTION



Hayfield softball player Brittany Wieland was selected first-team All-Conference 6 and second-team All-6A North region as a second baseman in 2015.

Hayfield's Wieland Passed Time with Netflix

Hayfield junior softball player Brittany Wieland, a second-team all-region second baseman for the Hawks in 2015, will move to catcher this year.

Q: In what city do you live?

A: I live in Fairfax (or Alexandria).

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

A: I never expected this much snow to fall, and while there may be only 1 or 2 feet talked about, since the plows came through (due to the lack of open space in my neighborhood) there's hardly any areas that aren't a good 3-4 feet deep.

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

A: My family keeps a pretty good stock of food around all the time so we were well prepared for this storm.

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

A: During the storm I spent a lot of time doing homework, spending time with friends, and watching Netflix (maybe more than I should have).

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

A: My teammate/friend, Si-

enna Williams, and I threw a couple snowballs around, but nothing big. We took some cool pictures also, but I haven't gotten a chance to go sledding.

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

A: On Wednesday night when the original snowfall fell, I was actually at a travel softball practice for my organization, the Vienna Stars. Once we got a good workout in, we were quick to get home and safe before the real danger started. Since then, however, I haven't been able to do much working out or practicing besides a few swings in the mirror every day.

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

A: I do not play a winter sport at Hayfield, but our softball team has been doing workouts all winter with the baseball team and we had some green days in the fall so it's been a long road of preparations.

Q: Are you interested in playing college softball? If so, are you committed anywhere?

A: I am interested in playing softball in college. No, I am not committed anywhere.

— JON ROETMAN

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



CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

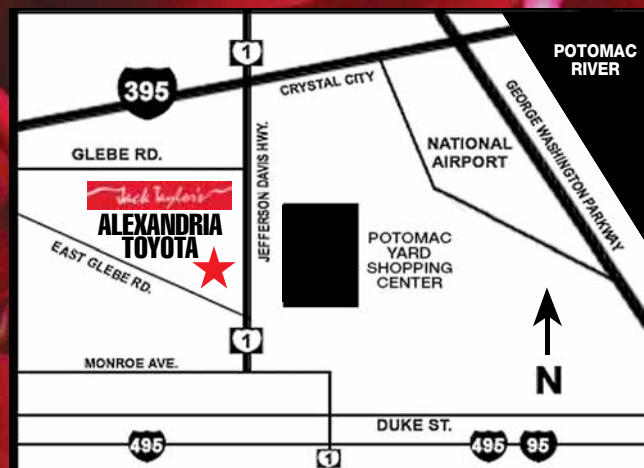
Senior guard Seamus Maloney and the Woodson boys' basketball team will look to snap a three-game losing skid when games resume following the recent snowstorm.

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INCLUDES: Inspect tires, brakes, wipers, lights, belts & hoses & fluid levels.

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TOYOTA GENUINE SERVICE
**WINTER
MAINTENANCE SPECIAL**

\$59⁹⁵

INCLUDES: Genuine Toyota oil filter, up to 5 qts of conventional oil*, inspect windshield wipers, tire rotation, check tire condition, check battery (with print-out), inspect and adjust all fluid levels, inspect air. Alexandria Toyota's 27 pt. inspection & cabin air filters

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\$139⁹⁵

INCLUDES BATTERY INSTALLATION

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TOYOTA GENUINE SERVICE
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INCLUDES: Install Genuine Toyota front brake pads, inspect front & rear rotors & drums, check tire condition and inspect all hardware. TCMC pads only.

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21 Announcements

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Casa Tequila Bar and Grill
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Lorton Station Blvd. Ste E,
Lorton, VA 22079. The above
establishment is applying to
the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT
OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE
CONTROL (ABC) for a Wine
and Beer on premises and
Mixed Beverage on premise
license to sell or manufacture
alcoholic beverages. Julio
Meledez, Owner
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. Ob-
jections should be registered
at www.abc.virginia.gov or
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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: Ob-
jections 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
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The reward
of a thing
well done, is
to have done it.
- Ralph Waldo
Emerson

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21 Announcements

21 Announcements

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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>.

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.

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

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 10

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
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.

FRIDAY/FEB. 12

**Old Town Hall Performance Series-U.S.
Navy Country Current.** 8 p.m. Old Town

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.

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

Respite Care volunteers give family caregivers of
a frail older adult a well-deserved break so they
can go shopping, attend a doctor's appointment
or just have coffee with a friend. Volunteers visit
and oversee the safety of the older adult for a
few hours each month. Support and training are
provided. Contact 703-324-7577, TTY 711, or
Kristin.Martin@fairfaxcounty.gov.

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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.

SATURDAY/FEB. 13

**Fairfax Art League Member Meeting and
Demo.** 10 a.m.-Noon. The Village Gallery,
3950 University Drive, Fairfax. An art
demonstration by Richard McMurray. Free.
www.fairfaxartleague.net. 703 587-9481.

Annual Valentine's Day Banquet. 6:30-11
p.m. Waterford Receptions, 6715 Commerce
St., Springfield. The Family Ministry of the
Greater Little Zion Baptist Church in Fairfax
is sponsoring their Annual Valentine's Day
Banquet. All couples and singles are invited
to fellowship with us and enjoy an evening of
fine dining, music, dancing and featured
entertainment. \$60 by Feb. 7. 703-763-9111.

Author Appearance. 1-3 p.m. Felix and
Oscar. 6671 Backlick Road, Springfield.
Ingrid King will be signing copies of her book
"Tortitude: the Big Book About Cats with a
Big Attitude" and will be answering cat
health and behavior questions. Light
refreshments will be provided. 703-866-
0222.

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.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

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.