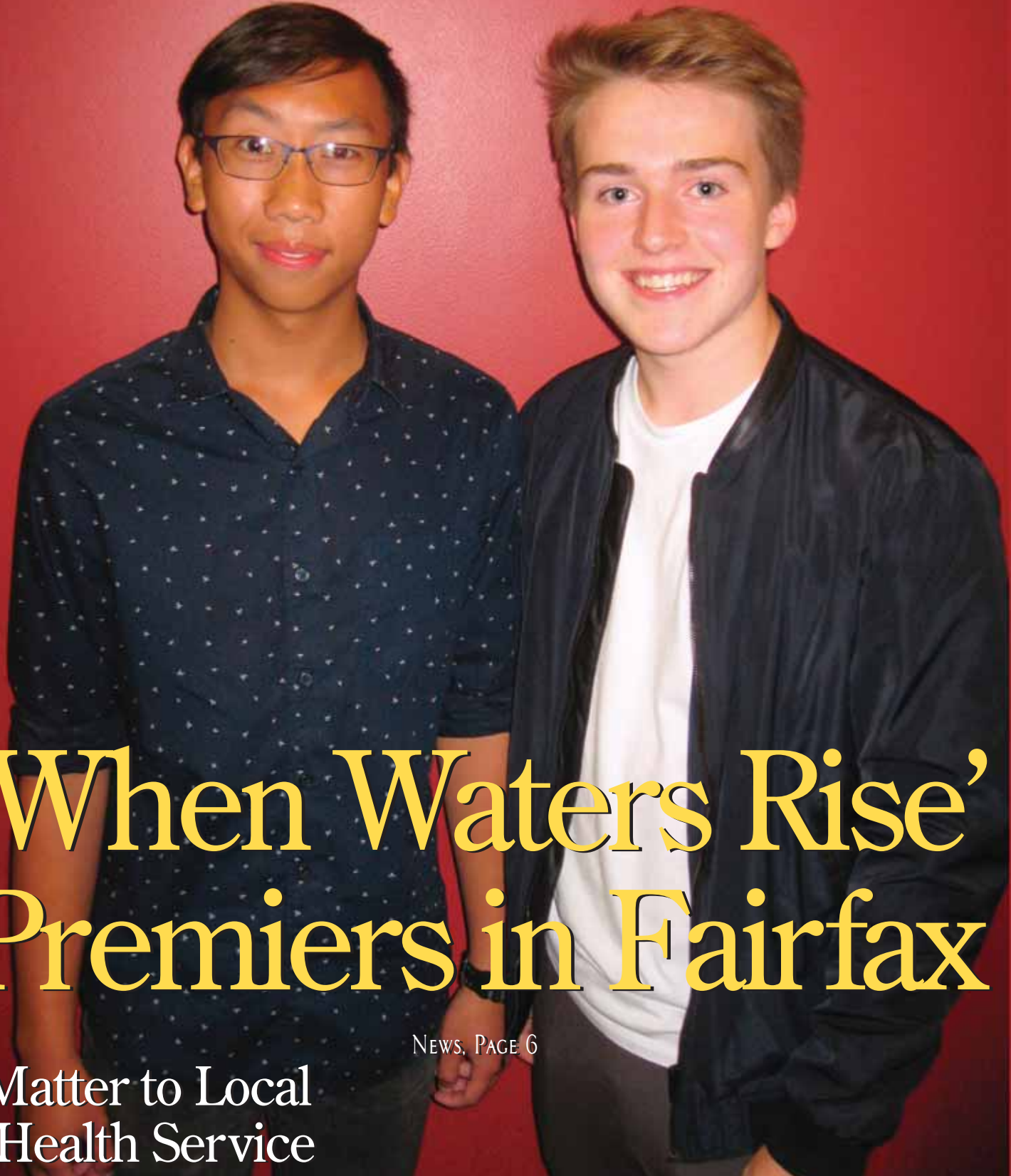




Great Falls CONNECTION

From left — Josh Leong and Benjamin Hunt, both 16, rising juniors at McLean and Langley High respectively, are co-creators of the film, 'When Waters Rise,' which had its film debut on Saturday, Aug. 20, at the Johnson Center Cinema at George Mason University in Fairfax.



'When Waters Rise' Premieres in Fairfax

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Minds Matter to Local Mental Health Service

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Paint Great Falls Set for Sept. 7-10

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Barbara understands the sacrifices and commitments made by educators in Virginia's 10th District and across the nation. She supports policies which empower parents and give states and localities more control over their local schools to ensure the best education for our children.

› The House passed Congresswoman Comstock's *Inspiring the Next Space Pioneers, Innovators, Researchers, and Explorers (INSPIRE) Women Act*, which will help young women in the STEM fields through programs at NASA.

› Congresswoman Comstock has authored the *Student Loan Relief Act*, which would offer students the ability to refinance their education loans to take advantage of lower interest rates. It would also allow employers to use pre-tax dollars to assist qualified employees in paying off student loan debt.

› Congresswoman Comstock is the **Co-Chair** of the *STARBASE Caucus*, which offers hands-on STEM education to students in elementary school. She has worked in a bipartisan manner to increase resources for this important program.

› Congresswoman Comstock voted for the bipartisan *Every Student Succeeds Act*. This bill, signed into law, represented a significant step toward improving our education system and empowers educators and parents to do what is best for each individual student.

"I come from a family of educators – my mom was a school teacher and librarian and my husband Chip is a retired Fairfax County assistant principal and teacher. My sister is a guidance counselor at a Fairfax County Public School. The education of our children and grandchildren has always been a top priority of mine. It's a privilege to represent you in Virginia's 10th Congressional District. Together, we can make sure our children receive a world class education."

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Minds Matter to Local Mental Health Service

PRS Inc. of McLean prepares for National Suicide Prevention Week.

BY MARTI MOORE
THE CONNECTION

Although National Suicide Prevention Week occurs next month, a local mental health service got a head start last week and launched its public awareness campaign on social media.

Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (PRS, Inc.) of McLean launched #MindsMatter on Twitter Aug. 12 and updated their Facebook page at PRS, Inc. to stimulate public interest in National Suicide Prevention Week, which occurs Sept. 5-13.

It's the second consecutive year PRS Inc. has used their #MindsMatter campaign to ask people for help with raising awareness about suicide prevention.

Participants can sign an online pledge to learn facts about mental health issues, share information and save lives. They can post selfie snapshots, register for two 5K walks next month in Fairfax County, take a stress test, set personal goals to improve their mental health, attend a workshop, buy a campaign T-shirt and donate to the cause.

Also, participants can tell their stories of hope and recovery from mental illness and suicide loss, says Laura Mayer — the PRS Inc. program director who manages the 24-hour CrisisLink hotline and textline service for individuals in need of someone who will



PHOTO COURTESY OF PRS INC.

Participants of last year's 5K walk to raise awareness and funds for suicide prevention model the inaugural #MindsMatter campaign T-shirt at a National Alliance on Mental Illness event in Tysons Corner Center, Sept. 19, 2015. Purchase the 2016 #MindsMatter T-shirt online for \$18 through www.prsinc.org. Visitors also can register for two 5K walks Sept. 24: One held at 9:30 a.m. by the NAMI on the plaza at the Tysons Corner Center and the other held at 2 p.m. by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention at the Fairfax County Government Center.

listen.

PRS Inc. states its CrisisLink telephone hotline handled 34,000 calls and 5,600 text conversations last year from Northern Virginians in distress. It is partners with the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board, which offers youth suicide prevention training online at fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/at-risk.

ACCORDING TO PRS Inc., "suicide is the 10th leading cause of death nationwide and second for people aged 15-24." It claims 42,000 Americans die by suicide each year. For each death, 278 individuals overcome thoughts of suicide and survive. In the Commonwealth, PRS Inc. states suicide is the second leading cause of death for Virginians ages 10-34.

Mayer herself is a suicide loss survivor. Her father, Glenn Mayer, died in 1998 at age 50 as he struggled with mental health issues.

Laura Mayer was 15 years old at the time. "After a suicide loss, it's important how we talk about it," she says. Although messages of sympathy and support from the community were a source of comfort to her, words of condemnation about her late father hurt.

In her early twenties, Laura Mayer came to terms with suicide and learned the only answer to the pain was a message of hope. She suggests people console individuals grieving the loss of a loved one from suicide with kind words, encouragement and hope.

FOR 53 YEARS, Northern Virginians have been served by the McLean non-profit. One goal of PRS Inc. is to break down the social stigmas of mental illness. Mayer agrees it is helpful to treat people coping with mental health issues with the same dignity and respect as folks with comparable physical ailments like cancer, diabetes or heart disease.

September is National Suicide Prevention month. Sept. 10 is World Suicide Prevention Day, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Visit PRS Inc. online at www.prsinc.org or their office at 1761 Old Meadow Rd. in McLean, Va. Call 703-536-9000 for information about their services.

When faced with a life or death crisis, call 911. If the situation is close to the boiling point, call the CrisisLink hotline, any time day or night, at 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) or send a text message to 85511 with just one word — CONNECT — and a hotline crisis worker will reach you as soon as possible.

Paint Great Falls to Be Held Sept. 7-10

The community is welcome to come watch art as it's being created "en Plein Air" (outdoors).

See artists around Great Falls creating their original plein-air paintings for prizes during the competition. This is an opportunity to see the art and chat with the artists who make it. Sign up via email at: info@greatfallsart.org to receive texts during the event and to be notified where art-

ists can be found painting that day in Great Falls. Artists can sign up online to participate. More details & registration at www.greatfallsart.org/plein-air

Attend a reception and see the art on display during the Art Walk in the Village: First Fridays on Friday, Sept. 9, 6-9 p.m. Start in any art studio at 756, 766 & 776 Walker Road, Great Falls. Free and open to the public.



Plein Air Competition Juror Jill Banks paints "en plein air."

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Spectators in Great Falls Village Centre watch Paint Great Falls participant Robert Gilbert create a painting.



Take One Action to Prevent Suicide

Suicide Prevention Week is Sept. 5-13, #MindsMatter

As school begins, we are accustomed to safety warnings. Slow down driving, watch for students along the roads, near schools and perhaps behaving unpredictably near intersections. Buckle seat belts. Wear bicycle helmets. Avoid distracted driving.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death for youth between 10 and 24 years old, according to the Centers for Disease Control, with 4,600 deaths a year, and 157,000 youth receiving emergency medical care for self-inflicted injuries. Overall, more than 42,000 Americans die by suicide each year.

Appropriately, Suicide Prevention Week is next week, Sept. 5-13, and the Connection is partnering with PRS CrisisLink to raise awareness about how to prevent suicide.

Risk factors for a suicide attempt include a history of depression or other mental illness, a history of previous suicide attempts, alcohol or drug abuse, stressful life event or loss, easy

access to lethal methods (firearms are the leading method of youth suicide), exposure to the suicidal behavior of others, and a family history of suicide. Young people who are LGBTQ are at higher risk.

Crisis Link was founded by volunteers in 1969 as the Northern Virginia Hotline, beginning as an evening hotline for Arlington teens. Within a year, hotline services were expanded to 24 hours a day to provide skilled, compassionate listening for people of all ages. The organization began serving individuals in crisis throughout the entire metropolitan Washington, D.C. region in 1970. In August of 2014, CrisisLink merged with PRS, Inc. Now named PRS CrisisLink, the program is able to provide services to more individuals than ever before.

In Fairfax County, where several high schools have mourned the suicide deaths of students, online interactive training is available to everyone about how to talk to a young person who might be depressed or considering suicide.

Fairfax County's Youth Suicide Prevention Training includes free online simulations that prepare educators and other adults to recognize when a young person is exhibiting signs of psychological distress, and to talk with the young person to be able to connect them with

Help Available

CrisisLink Regional Hotline: 703-527-4077
CrisisLink Regional Textline: Text CONNECT to 85511
National Hopeline Network: 1-800-SUI-CIDE
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK

appropriate support. Also available is a free online simulation for high school students to practice how to talk to a friend struggling with depression or psychological distress. Access to these programs is available by visiting www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/at-risk

We also can't let the discussion on gun violence add to the stigma of mental health illness. People with mental health issues are far more likely to be victims of violence that to perpetrate it. When the debate turns to a push and pull between advocating for gun control vs. advocating for broad suspicion of people with mental health concerns, the results are not benign.

We have to bring discussion of depression and other psychological distress into the light, and we must push back against the stigma that keeps many from getting life-saving help.

— MARY KIMM

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Courage to Vote

To the Editor:

This past month I worked with local students in the community and my boy scout troop to hold two non-partisan voter registration drives as a part of my Eagle Scout project. We held this drive at the Vienna Farmer's Market.

In many ways this registration drive was a success. We were able to talk to over 2,000 Vienna voters, and remind them about the Virginia photo identification law that requires all voters to bring a form of government issued identification. We were able to help 80 people apply for absentee ballots and registered 20 people to vote.

I wanted to share the impact that I hope this drive had on our community as well as what I learned.

Something I am very proud of is the fact that the drive was run completely by local youth volunteers. Everyone who registered new voters was a student. In fact a majority of these students could not even vote themselves!

A student run drive was important to me for many reasons. I hope that my fellow classmates and fellow boy scouts who participated in this drive came to the same conclusion as I did: the power of a vote is a right we should hold dear. I hope they saw voting as a civic responsibility that enables Americans to participate in the democracy our forefathers fought for and defended. Participating in that democracy should be a priority when we turn 18.

I also hope this outpour of young people inspired our community.

We met many residents this past month who told us that they were in a dilemma. One older

gentleman said that not only did he not want a registration form but he wasn't planning on voting because he couldn't bear to make the choice between "a crook and a narcissist".

I hope this student run force reminded voters like this gentleman and many others in our community who may be facing a similar dilemma that they are not choosing between two candidates - they are choosing a future. A future for me and a future for all of us at the drive who are not able to cast a ballot.

Really that is what all elections are about: choosing the candidate who will build a better America for the next generation to build on.

I understand that this is a very divisive election. It is hard to ignore the fact that the two major candidates have the highest unfavorability ratings in history. But still I urge you: don't squander your choice by choosing to sit on the sidelines. Find the courage to cast a ballot this year because this election, quite frankly, is bigger than just you.

I won't be able to vote this year and neither will thousands of other Vienna citizens who are under 18 but we are all counting on you to make that choice on our behalf on Nov. 8.

In 1920 women got the right to vote. In 1965 the Civil Rights Act prohibited racial discrimination in voting. In 1975 the right to vote for young people who were 18 and older was protected by the passage of the 26th amendment. Our history has been shaped and defined by people who have demanded a fair ballot.

Why then would anyone choose to forgo a right that others have worked so hard to defend simply because they don't have the guts to make a decision?

A lot has changed from that first election in

1789, but what I hope remains is the promise solidified by the words "We" in that first line of the constitution - the idea that a democracy means that all people are heard.

Raman Khanna

Vienna

The writer is 17-year-old rising senior at George C. Marshall High School.

Does He Bite?

To the Editor:

Well, they're finally over! Suffering through the breathless NBC "coverage" of Olympic "sports," many of which few of us have ever heard of, involving Zika-virus and Rio-mugging avoidance tips, inane commentary, and tedious "up-close and personals" punctuated by the occasional showing of an actual event and immediate post-race interviews with "heroes" gasping for breath, I wondered about the origins of the ridiculous habit of winning athletes appearing to take a bite out of their medal before the cameras. Testing for 24-karat purity, perhaps? Teeth marks could potentially reduce the full tax deductibility of the value of an Olympic medal proposed by Senator "Chuck" Schumer — friend of underpaid athletes everywhere.

Gnawing away at trophies — where did this all begin? This metal-chomping is now almost as de rigueur as patented in-game hugging and slapping and weeping at the drop of a beach volleyball, say.

Harry Locock, sports fan
Reston



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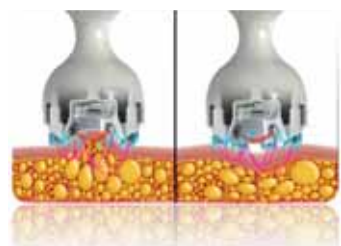
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PHOTOS BY STEVE HIBBARD/THE CONNECTION

From left — McLean residents Benjamin Hunt, Josh Leong and Stephen Sheridan, creators of the film, 'When Waters Rise,' which had its film debut on Saturday, Aug. 20, at the Johnson Center Cinema at George Mason University in Fairfax.



About 100 people attended the film premiere of 'When Waters Rise,' which was co-created by McLean residents Josh Leong and Benjamin Hunt.

'When Waters Rise' Film Premiere

McLean residents, all age 16, produce film based on a Biblical parable.

BY STEVE HIBBARD
THE CONNECTION

About 100 people attended a film premiere for "When Waters Rise" on Saturday, Aug. 20, at the Johnson Center Cinema at George Mason University in Fairfax. The 17-minute film was co-created by rising high school juniors from McLean — Benjamin Hunt and Josh Leong with the music by Stephen Sheridan, all aged 16. After raising \$2,750 on Kickstarter and social media with the support of 27 backers, it took them nine months to write, produce, direct, and make the finished product.

Benjamin Hunt, who attends Langley High School, said the film is a Biblical parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders from the Gospel of St. Matthew. "A weathered father and daughter struggle to find shelter in the midst of an unprecedented shoreline disaster," said Hunt. "Surrounded by despair, anxiety, and mass panic, the pair seek foundation on the rock in order to survive the storm - discovering hope, love, and comfort in each other's trust. Wills are tested, and victory is found in a position of surrender to something stronger than both of them."

Josh Leong, who attends McLean High School, added: "This project was curated in response to the growing problem of depression and stress in today's youth. Our generation is constantly bombarded with



From Left: Benjamin Hunt, Hannah Cameron, Braeden Peters, Josh Leong, and Stephen Sheridan during the film premiere of 'When Waters Rise.'

overwhelming 'storms of life,' and this film seeks a solution to finding refuge in the midst of struggles — whether that pertains to school, work, or personal-emotional life."

THE DUO spent many Sundays after attending McLean Bible Church in Ben's basement developing the story. "After writing a first draft, we spent months tweaking the script until it reached its current form," said Hunt.

Leong added: "Most of the concept was written down within the first month of writing. We knew the aesthetic we were going for, and we had the same vision of taking this Biblical story and turning it into a visual art form. We focused heavily on the human drama, and the relationship between the father and the daughter. But ev-

erything we wrote remained true to the original parable itself — we used the passage itself to guide and direct our chain of events, creating parallels in our characters with things in the real world."

Filming was done in three stages. In order to capture the sunrise shots, they woke up at 2:45 a.m. and headed to the Eastern Shore. They filmed for 16 hours on a beach and in the freezing cold waters of the Chesapeake Bay during March. They used a DJI drone for the aerial shots and a Glidecam for the fast-running shots. During Unit 2 of filming, they made use of high quality GoPro Hero 4's for underwater shots.

For editing, which was the most time-consuming part of the nine-month project, they used Final Cut Pro X, After Effects, and a few other software programs. They even

worked with a visual effects artist from the country of Georgia to create a tidal wave — all for a reasonable price. "Editing was a very complex process; we had to constantly make adjustments to the audio and video, including color and special effects," said Hunt.

"We had challenges, and successes, and it is so gratifying to see the finished product and share it with our friends and family," said Hunt. "We learned to be firm with vendors, but not pushy. We learned that every dollar spent matters and to spend wisely. And, we learned that two people managing a project may not always see eye to eye, but if they keep focused on the goal, they can achieve anything."

LEONG ADDED: "As I worked on this film, I felt God work on my own heart. I was living out the message of the film. We talk about storms of life, and I'm weathering one myself. Little by little I was taught not only how to direct, to communicate, to manage, to organize - but I was being taught how to use my talent for something bigger."

Ben's mother Amy Hunt, who attended the premiere, said: "It was awe-inspiring to see two young men lead a project from beginning to end with just talent, a dream and their faith."

Josh's mother May Leong added: "It's been an unbelievable experience of collaborating with friends and sharing a common passion in filmmaking. I've seen them work together in ways beyond what I've ever seen in myself while in high school to produce a piece of work that I'm extremely proud of."

Josh's father Jin Leong added: "I'm really proud of what Josh and Ben have done. They put in a lot of work and most importantly, the story of the film was meaningful and valuable."

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CALENDAR

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

ONGOING

- Great Falls Farmers Market.** Saturdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., 778 Walker Road Great Falls. <http://greatfallsfarmersmarket.org/>
- Cirque du Soleil "Kurios."** July 21 to Sept. 18. Tysons II, The Lerner Town Center, 8025 Galleria Drive, Tysons Corner. \$39-\$170. 1-877-924-7783. cirquedusoleil.com/kurios.
- Cindy Dibbs Exhibit.** Aug. 1-31. Katie's Coffe House, 760 Walker Road, Great Falls. Photographs from "Seasons." 703-759-4673.
- Art Walk in the Village: First Fridays** beginning Sept. 9 6 - 9 p.m. through Dec.31 at 756 Walker Road, Great Falls, VA. Admission free and open to the public. Visit: <http://www.greatfallsart.org/artwalk/>

SATURDAY/SEPT. 1

Paint the Town Reception. 4-6 p.m. 115 Pleasant St. NW. Vienna. Vienna Arts Society members exhibition. ViennaArtsSociety.org.

SATURDAY/ SEPT. 3-4

Middle Eastern Food Festival on Labor Day weekend. 11 a.m. - 11 p.m., Saturday, noon - 6 p.m., Sunday, Holy Transfiguration Melkite Greek-Catholic Church will host its 23rd annual Middle Eastern Food Festival on the church grounds at 8501 Lewinsville Road, McLean. The Festival will feature authentic Middle Eastern food, music and dancing, as well as vendors. Debke dance will be led by instructors, or participate in the backgammon tournament. Children an enjoy moonbounce, face painting, pony rides and the petting zoo. Rain or shine. Free admission and parking. 703-734-9566 or www.MiddleEasternFoodFestival.com.

SUNDAY/SEPT. 4

The Alan Scott Band. 6-8 p.m. Great Falls Village Centre Green, Great Falls. A combination of rock combined with time-honored blues, funk, and Brit Pop influences. www.celebrategreatfalls.org/concerts-on-the-green/.

WEDNESDAY-SATURDAY/SEPT 7-10

Paint Great Falls: Plein Air Competition. The community is welcome to come out and watch the art as it's being made. Find artists around Great Falls creating their original plein air paintings for prizes during the competition. This is a great opportunity to see the art and chat with the artists who make it. Sign up via email info@greatfallsart.org to receive texts during the event to be notified where artists are painting around Great Falls. Attend a reception and see the art on display during the - Art Walk in the Village: First Fridays

SATURDAY/ SEPT. 10

McLean Fall Community Garage Sale. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at 1420 Beverly Road, McLean, behind Staybridge Suites Hotel. The McLean Community Center will hold its annual Fall Garage Sale. Admission and parking are free. A limited number of selling spaces remain and can be purchased for \$45. Individuals selling personal items and some commercial vendors may participate. The deadline is Wednesday, Sept. 7. Call 703-790-0123 or visit www.mcleancenter.org/special-events

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Labor Day Weekend

Saturday, Sept. 3, 11:00 am–11:00 pm

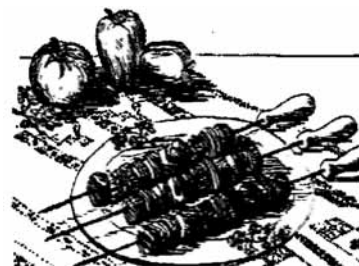
Sunday, Sept. 4, 12:00 noon–6:00 pm

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A Passing Reference



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Recently, a week ago in fact, Stuart Grief, a fellow non-small cell lung cancer, stage IV patient/survivor, died from his disease. Stuart succumbed to his cancer less than two years after his late fall, 2014 diagnosis. My wife, Dina and I first met him — and his wife, Amy, in late April 2015, at LUNGeivity's (the nation's largest private foundation dedicated to lung cancer research, outreach, etc.; www.LUNGeivity.org) HOPE Summit, a conference for lung cancer survivors, caregivers and medical professionals, held annually in Rosslyn, Va. At that time, six months post diagnosis, Stuart said he was "N.E.D," which means "no evidence of disease," the first time I had ever heard that acronym. We spent a few hours together for dinner at a local restaurant one night (Old Angler's Inn, actually), enough to exchange pleasantries and email addresses. Other than that one evening, our association went no further. However, Stuart and his wife lived in Needham, Ma., the same town/suburb of Boston where my best friend, Cary, and his wife, Mindy live. Given certain circumstances, I thought there might be a foundation for a friendship between the four of them so I encouraged all parties to make a connection, which they did, and over the next/last 15 months they saw each other socially and spoke regularly on the phone.

Though the Griefs and Louries were not in touch directly, we did receive Amy's email updates on Stu's treatment/health status, and of course Cary updated me as well. Hardly were we in the inner circle. We were mostly on the outside looking in. Nevertheless, I was involved, emotionally, and certainly could appreciate and understand all that Stuart and Amy were enduring. When you're a member of the club (cancer patient/survivor/caregiver), you, (at least I do), draw strength/gain hope from survivorship stories and unfortunately feel weakened/compromised by deaths and disappointments. When I received Cary's email last Saturday about Stuart's death, including a scanned copy of his obituary from the Boston Globe, immediately, I questioned out loud, rhetorically, its reality and promptly called Cary. After a brief conversation, as I caught him in the middle of something, it was all confirmed. We agreed to speak later in the day at a mutually convenient time and so I hung up the phone. Then I walked from my home office to the den to tell Dina that Stuart had died. I could barely get the words out before I started crying.

It was a blow to be sure. It was as if part of me had also died. I felt sad and oddly enough, somewhat at greater risk than before I had received the news. I hardly knew Stuart, and other than the lung cancer connection, there was no other substance to our relationship. However, as cancer patients, we are all connected; we are living the same life, fearing the same uncontrollable outcomes and juggling the same emotions; and what effects one of us, good or bad, effects all of us. Hearing about another cancer's patient's death is the worst possible news — other than our own discouraging news, that we can imagine.

But when you actually see it, hear it — and ultimately believe it ('it' being a cancer death), the reality of your own mortality/health circumstances come crashing down; at least it did for me. I got my bearings soon enough and thankfully, for me, life has gone on. Still, I feel as if something is missing from my life. And even though Stuart and I never spoke after our initial time together, I felt as if he was part of my support system and I his. Not a key part, but in the conversation nonetheless — and most definitely in the club. Stuart will be missed, but never forgotten.

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

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