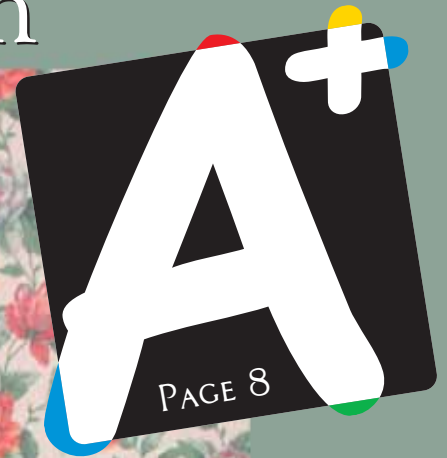




Fairfax Station

CONNECTION Clifton & Lorton

Jamie and Donna Netschert were part of the Clifton Candlelight Homes Tour in December 2013. Dr. Netschert died of cancer, Nov. 29, at age 66.



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'He Wasn't Perfect, but He Was Close'

Dr. Jamie Netschert dies at age 66.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Mention Jamie Netschert to people in Clifton, Centreville or Chantilly, and they'll either know him as a longtime friend and neighbor or their trusted veterinarian – or in many cases, both. He and his family lived in the Town of Clifton for more than three decades, and he owned the Clifton-Centreville Animal Clinic in Centreville since 1984.

So when Netschert died of cancer, Nov. 29, at age 66, the loss hit the community hard. But no one misses him more than Donna, his wife of 40 years. and their only child, daughter Caroline. As a husband and father, said Donna, "He wasn't perfect, but he was close. And he was always a gentleman."

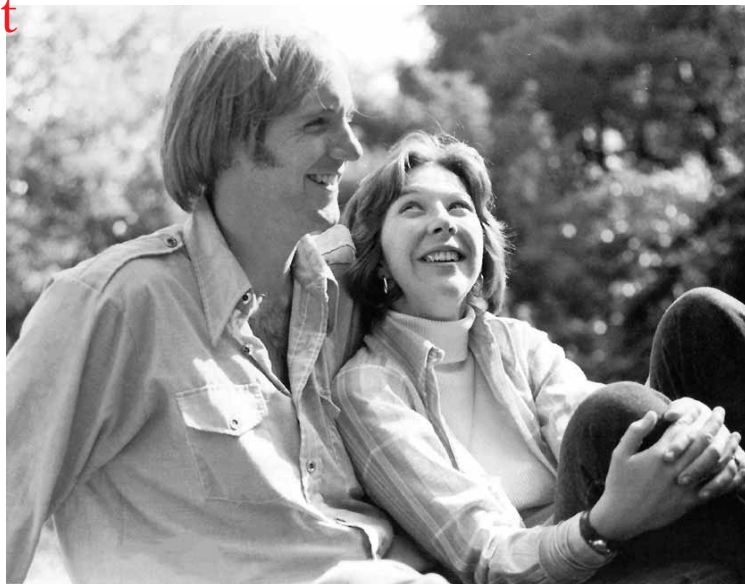
The couple met at a party in Oakton in August 1975 when Jamie was 25. After graduating from Weber State University in Utah with a master's in zoology, he moved back to Virginia. He'd been working at a Reston lab while applying to veterinary school and was leaving Oct. 1 for England where he'd just been accepted to Cambridge University's Department of Veterinary Medicine.

"I spotted him across the room and he caught my eye," said Donna. "I was fascinated with this tall guy with the big, blue eyes. We started talking and hit it off right away; we had a lot in common. Later, he said, 'I'll call you,' and he did, the next day."

The following day, they each announced to their parents that they'd found the person they wanted to marry. "We were head-over-heels in love," said Donna. "By Christmas, we were engaged, and then I joined him in Cambridge."

Part of Netschert's appeal, she said, was that he was so attentive and really listened when she spoke. "He saw and acknowledged me," said Donna. "He was present and I could feel it. And I think that was part of his success, also, as a vet and as a friend. He was an introvert, but he just had a special way about him. He also had a great sense of humor and loved a good joke."

Describing him as knowledgeable and well-read, she said he could hold his own on any subject. "And through the animals, people would often pour their hearts out to him, and he listened and made them feel better," she said. "He saw his clients as people



Young and in love: Jamie and Donna Netschert in summer 1975.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DONNA NETSCHERT



Jamie and Donna Netschert at a wedding.

with feelings about their animals. He hurt with them when their animals died, and he even attended their burials, when asked."

Netschert also loved living in Clifton. Standing 6 feet, 7 inches, he played pickup basketball games with his buddies in the town park. "He also served hot dogs and chili with the Clifton Gentleman's Club on Clifton Day," said Caroline. "And our home was a must-stop, Halloween destination with the infamous talking spider of Chestnut Street, operated by my dad and friends."

Calling him a "renaissance man," she said he brewed

his own beer, practiced amateur meteorology and grew flowers and vegetables. "He was also fond of history and cooking for his family," said Caroline. "Science was his religion and he believed in the goodness of humanity. He was a diehard Democrat and advocate of equality, and he had a natural ability to make everyone he met feel special."

NETSCHERT even participated in Clifton theater productions and enjoyed singing karaoke and dancing to Motown music. A lifelong baseball fan, he rooted for the Washington Nationals. And he was passionate about photographing birds.

"His art talent came out in his photography," said his wife. "He planned our vacations around where the birds were. We've been to every rain forest in the world, and Jamie especially loved birding in New Zealand – every day, he saw a new bird."

But in April 2014, Netschert was diagnosed with mucosal melanoma, an aggressive form of cancer. "After having a tumor removed, he got the news at

SEE MEMORIES, PAGE 9

Dr. Jamie Netschert holds a furry patient at the Clifton-Centreville Animal Clinic.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DONNA NETSCHERT

Remembering the Life of Jamie Netschert

Hundreds gather to celebrate him.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Jamie Netschert may not have been at his celebration-of-life party in person, but he was certainly there in spirit. On Saturday afternoon, Dec. 17, more than 300 people gathered in a huge tent in his yard to remember him, share both fond and funny memories of his life and take comfort in the fact that he'd been a part of theirs.

"This town and his community where he practiced had such love for him, and he loved them back," said his sister, Julie Netschert. "His dying wish was to have a celebration with all the people he loved so well."

But, she said, "I had no idea just how brilliant he was, because the measure of brilliance is the number of people whose lives he affected. He connected with so many people in such a profound way. He was my little brother, so his death tears me up because I always thought he'd be taking care of me. He was just an extraordinary person."

Clifton's Steve Botts knew Jamie Netschert for 30 years. They were friends and neighbors, played Thursday night and Sunday evening pickup basketball games in town and played on the same Fairfax County softball and basketball teams. "He was also the vet for our dogs," said Botts. "I was away on travel when our dog died, and Jamie even came over to the house and buried him. He

was that kind of guy, as well as being sharp, literate and well-read."

Bill Fritz was also a three-decade, Clifton friend who played softball and basketball with Netschert. Calling him a "gentle giant," he described Netschert as a "friendly, nice, laid-back guy, intelligent, giving and professional. He took care of all our six dogs over the years. When we got our new puppy, he took one look at her and said, 'You're going to have your hands full with this one,' and he was right."

Netschert and Clifton's Rick Dygve were friends for 35 years. "Caroline and our younger daughter were in preschool together, and our wives would get together," said Dygve. "Jamie and I would talk about sports and play basketball, one-on-one. Our families also vacationed together."

"He was like a brother to me," continued Dygve. "I'd see him three or four times a week. I shared laughs with Jamie and cried with him when we put away a dog. He was very caring and grew attached to the dogs; he was a great vet. He was also someone you enjoyed being with; he was a lot of fun and just a good man."

ON THE BASKETBALL COURT, said Dygve, Netschert's nickname was "The Saint." That's because, during a county league game, the referee called the ball out of bounds on the

SEE SAINT, PAGE 6

Sheriff's Deputy Cleared in Fatal Shooting

Commonwealth's Attorney: homicide was justified self-defense.

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

In a decision released Dec. 16, Commonwealth's Attorney Ray Morrogh cleared Fairfax County Master Deputy Sheriff Patrick McPartlin of any criminal wrongdoing in the fatal shooting of Yovani Amaya Gomez that took place Aug. 15 outside Inova Fairfax Hospital.

Morrogh's decision comes after receiving the results of the Fairfax County Police Department criminal investigation on Nov. 15.

McPartlin was one of the sheriff deputies involved in the death of inmate Natasha McKenna at the the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center. McKenna, a woman with a history of mental illness, died in February 2015, a few days after she was restrained, shackled, hooded and shocked with a taser four times in an attempt to move her to the Alexandria jail. Morrogh decided against any charges against the deputies, including McPartlin, in that case as well.

Police had previously released some details of the chain of events leading up to McPartlin shooting Gomez in August. Morrogh's report added further information to the timeline, which included Gomez be-

ing taken in for medical attention for possible dehydration and/or mental health episode, and his discharge with no diagnosis for either. After being escorted to the bus stop outside Inova by a security guard, another pair of guards responded to a report of Gomez wielding a weapon.

Gomez hurt one of the guards, Morrogh says, who also requested backup from law enforcement. MDS McPartlin was one of two deputies guarding a prisoner at the hospital and responded to the call for help.

Gomez charged at McPartlin, who Morrogh says attempted to back up and then began firing.

MORROGH'S REPORT quotes McPartlin as saying, "... before I shot I think I was trying to get back but he was too close so I had to shoot."

McPartlin did not remember giving Gomez any commands prior to shooting, Morrogh says, though other guards who were at the scene said the deputy did ask Gomez to calm down and stop charging and put the apparent weapon down.

Earlier in the day, Gomez first approached Fairfax County Police officer K. Woodward in his cruiser on Little River Turnpike on what was an extremely hot afternoon.

Morrogh said it was clear to Fairfax County Police officer K. Woodward that "Mr. Gomez did not speak English proficiently."

Woodward attempted to ask him if he wanted to hurt himself using the Google Translate cell phone app. Woodward had also summoned paramedics to check Gomez out physically.

Rescue determined Gomez's vital signs were within normal ranges, Morrogh reports.

But when Gomez appeared to answer in the affirmative with "Sí," he did want to harm himself, Woodward asked that he be taken to Inova Fairfax Hospital.

Morrogh says the medics described Gomez as non-combative, mumbling in Spanish and at one time pointing to his head and saying "voices."

Gomez was examined at the hospital by a physician and Spanish-speaking nurse, the report continues.

"They advised Officer Woodward that Mr. Gomez denied any mental health issues and further said that he did not want to hurt himself," Morrogh said. "They also told Officer Woodward that Mr. Gomez told them that he had a stomach ache and didn't feel well."

Gomez's diagnosis after a physical exami-

nation and mental condition assessment was that he was not in distress but suffering from "general weakness," according to Morrogh's report.

Old Dominion Security guard Ezra Carter found Gomez in the lobby after he was discharged some time between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. Carter used an interpreter to find that Gomez wanted to be taken to a homeless shelter. The guard then walked Gomez to the bus stop, Morrogh's report says.

In the conclusion of his seven-page investigation report, Morrogh reiterates Gomez charged at McPartlin with what appeared to be a sword but later turned out to be a sign post pulled from the ground.

"Reasonably perceiving himself to be in imminent danger of death or great bodily harm, MDS McPartlin, while retreating, discharged his weapon until the threat was abated," Morrogh says in the report. "In my legal opinion, this is a case of justifiable homicide and no individual is criminally responsible for the death of Yovani A. Gomez."

IN A RESPONSE STATEMENT, Sheriff Stacey Kincaid said, "Our condolences go to Mr. Gomez's family. Now that Commonwealth's Attorney Ray Morrogh has released his findings that no criminal

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Power of Citizen Advocacy

On Monday, December 19th, the 2nd year anniversary of the federal passage of the ABLE Act, Delegate Eileen Filler-Corn (D-41) joined ABLEnow for a press conference to commemorate the opening of the first ABLEnow account in Virginia. Fittingly, this account was opened for Natalie Beck, whose parents first came up with the idea for ABLE accounts several years ago.

"The ABLE Act is proof of the power of citizen advocacy," said Filler-Corn. "From the kitchen table of Catherine and Stephen Beck in the 41st District, to President Obama's desk and to Governor McAuliffe's pen, twice, the 2015 bill and the 2016 bill both experienced a long journey. A journey that Stephen unfortunately was not able to see come to a close. But Stephen's legacy will live on through his daughter Natalie, and through these ABLE Accounts and the families that they will help."

Delegate Filler-Corn introduced and helped pass the Virginia Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act during the 2015 Virginia General Assembly Session. This law makes it possible for individuals with disabilities and their families to open tax-free savings accounts to cover important expenses such as education and housing.

Other guests that joined Delegate Filler-Corn and the Beck family at the press con-



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

The first ABLEnow account in Virginia was opened for Natalie Beck, whose parents first came up with the idea for ABLE accounts several years ago.

ference included U.S. Rep. Don Beyer (D-8), Mary Morris, the CEO of Virginia529 College Savings Plan, ABLEnow, Michael Morris with the ABLE National Resource Center and Sara Hart Weir with the ABLE

Del. Eileen Filler-Corn (D-41) joins ABLEnow in commemorating the opening of the first ABLEnow account in Virginia.



The guests at the press conference commemorating the opening of the first ABLEnow account in Virginia.

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OPINION

Congress Coming Together To Find and Fund Faster Cures

BY BARBARA COMSTOCK
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE (R-IO)

On Dec. 8, I joined with a bipartisan group of House and Senate members, and the Speaker of the House, as the Speaker signed the 21st Century Cures Act. It was a joyful occasion as we concluded this year's session with what I believe is one of the most important and game-changing pieces of legislation passed this year. It was signed into law days later by the President and supported by more than 700 research, doctor and patient advocacy groups and provides \$4.8 billion in new research investments to the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

At the ceremony, Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander recounted the testimony of Dr. Francis Collins, director of the NIH, who has highlighted the new, exciting cures possible within the next 10 years: an artificial pancreas to help people with diabetes; medicine to limit the effects of Alzheimer's; a vaccine for Zika; a vaccine for HIV; a vaccine for the flu; the use of regenerative medicine using our own cells to restore a damaged heart; and non-addictive pain medicines that will help curb opioid addiction.

Imagine how different our health care system could be with these innovations. It is no wonder that Dr. Collins calls NIH the "National Institute of Hope." In Loudoun County, so many of us have seen that hope in the inspirational advocacy work of families such as Mark and Ellyn Miller, who lost their daughter, Gabriella,



COMMENTARY

to cancer, and Chris and Roya Giordano, who lost their son, Mathias. The 21st Century Cures Act honors their efforts with \$1.8 billion for cancer research, which will support the Cancer Moonshot initiative.

Currently, there are only 500 treatments for 10,000 known diseases. With the mapping of the human genome and advances over the past several decades, we have more genetic clues about cancer and other diseases. But we still need to remove barriers to increase research collaboration, identify diseases earlier through personalized medicine, reform the FDA and modernize clinical trials, and remove unnecessary regulation for developing new medical apps. This legislation does this and streamlines the entire biomedical ecosystem.

With the 21st Century Cures Act now law, many of NIH's initiatives will be enhanced — such as the BRAIN Initiative that will help in fighting diseases like Alzheimer's. The bill will also concentrate funding on NIH's Precision Medicine Initiative that will focus research dollars on genetic, lifestyle and environmental variations of disease.

The Inova Schar Cancer Institute in Fairfax is one of the premier cancer centers in our region that can be part of this new era of innovation. Last month, they announced a new research partnership with the University of Virginia to develop the Global Genomics and Bioinformatics Research Institute, located at the Inova Center for Personalized Health in Fairfax.

I joined our private and public advocates at the announcement where they explained the mission: "The institute will recruit researchers, scientists and investigators who will engage in collaborative research focused on genomics, functional biology, bioinformatics, biologically driven engineering, precision medicine, translational research, development of targeted therapeutics and commercialization of new discoveries." This partnership will also work to achieve designation by the National Cancer Institute as a Comprehensive Cancer Center and establish a regional campus of the UVA School of Medicine at Inova. More partnerships are anticipated, as well as support from my former colleagues in the General Assembly, led by Speaker Bill Howell. As Todd Stottlemeyer, CEO of the Inova Center for Personalized Health, said, "This new partnership will further expand Inova's ground-breaking research in precision medicine and help us to realize the promise of personalized health."

While the legislation advances research and medical breakthroughs and provides for reforms and investments for faster cures and treatments, it also incorporates provisions we had passed to reform our mental health system and fight against the heroin and the opioid epidemic, which was recently declared a Public Health Emergency in Virginia.

This is just the beginning of what will be a new chapter in medical innovation. Virginia can play a critical and lifesaving role in bringing faster cures and treatments to patients plagued with these cruel diseases. We in Congress must continue to be partners by seeking the best policies and investments that allow this innovation to soar.

Fairfax Police Reform Is Well Underway

BY PHILLIP NIEDZIELSKI-EICHNER

I endorse the Connection Newspaper's recent editorial on the progress Fairfax County has made implementing the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission, on which I had the honor of serving as chairman of the Use of Force Subcommittee. I have had the opportunity to interact with many members of the Fairfax Police Department, ranging from commanders to precinct-level supervisors and officers, all of whom I hold in high regard. We have a fine police department that we are fortunate to have protecting us day-in and day-out.

While the August 2013 shooting death of John Geer was the catalyst for the commission's formation, our charge was to assess the Department's performance against national best practices. As we executed against this charge, we identified both areas for improvement and mechanisms we believed would strengthen the public's trust and confidence in the department.

Forming a commission is a time-honored tool by public officials to delay action — or avoid it altogether — since there are always significant barriers to achieving change to deep-rooted organizational practices, traditions and culture. I commend both the Fairfax Board of Supervisors and the Police Department, particularly its chief and command leadership, with ensuring that the Police Commission's work is not sitting on the shelf gathering dust.

With my seven-month commission experience and a year's worth of persistent focus on implementation alongside a dedicated subset of fellow commissioners, I can state without reservation that both the letter and spirit of the commission's recommendations have been embraced by Fairfax County.

Fairfax County is well on the way toward approving and implementing the preponderance of the commission's recommendations. Of note in this regard are the following:

❖ The two-pronged approach to independent Police Department oversight advocated by the commission and recently approved by the

Board of Supervisors is significant in light of historical resistance to civilian review of police actions.

❖ The changes directed by the supervisors and Chief Roessler with regard to the Police Department's openness and transparency are substantial and have already helped regain the public trust lost, in part, because of the dismal handling of the Geer case.

❖ The county's investment in Diversion First, which provides treatment rather than jail for nonviolent people with mental illness, and broad-based police officer training in crisis intervention techniques, are already paying dividends. Those with mental illness are being treated with greater sensitivity to their affliction, easing the potential for unnecessary suffering, while also reducing the potential for officer injuries and the need for the use of force. Ultimately, this will also help insure a more effective use of tax dollars.

As important and forward leaning as these

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NEWS

Filling Oversight Positions

Supervisors outline procedures for bringing on police auditor and Civilian Review Panel.

One week after voting to establish Fairfax County's first Civilian Review Panel for police, Public Safety Committee chair supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock) and Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova outlined steps to be taken to fill the nine-member panel, as well as hire an independent police auditor.

Near the conclusion of the Dec. 13 Public Safety Committee meeting, Cook said a letter will be sent to organizations around the county by the end of December inviting them to submit nominees for the review panel. Those groups include minority organizations, disability services, interfaith groups and others that were part of the Election Process Improvement Commission.

Each supervisor will also be able to nominate individuals for the panel.

Cook said all nominations should be received by Jan. 31, 2017. For the next two weeks those applications will be available to the supervisors, who will then review them in closed session on Feb. 14.

On Sept. 20, the board created another

oversight entity, the office of the independent police auditor. Both bodies were recommendations from the Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission.

The members of the Civilian Review Panel will be volunteers, while the Independent Auditor and staff will be paid Fairfax County employees.

The job posting for auditor has closed, and received many applications, Bulova said. Six candidates have been determined by Fairfax County human resources to fulfill the requirements of the advertisement, supervisor Penny Gross (D-Mason) said.

Bulova said she's appointed a screening committee for the auditor applicants, including Auditor of the Board Jim Shelton, Connection Newspapers publisher and Ad Hoc Commission member Mary Kimm, Ad Hoc Commission member Adrian Steel, chair of the commission's Independent Oversight and Investigations subcommittee Jack Johnson, and supervisors Gross and Cook.

— TIM PETERSON

Police Reform Underway

FROM PAGE 4

steps are, I believe the recrafting and re-writing of the Police Department's Use of Force policy, also known as General Order 540, warrants particular note. The new Use of Force policy encompasses the commission recommendations, which also incorporated use-of-force recommendations made by the independent Police Executive Research Forum. It gives emphasis to the sanctity of human life, dignity and liberty of all persons as its overarching value or driving theme; and it calls for de-escalation as the strategy of first resort when confronted with a threat rather than the use of deadly force.

Every member of the Fairfax Police Department, from command leadership to police officer will receive training under General Order 540 by the end of January, 2017. Police officer performance will be assessed against the standards set in this policy, while recruitment and vetting of police officer candidates will focus on the abilities and temperament that comport with the values captured therein.

While the preponderance of our recommendations have been approved and are being implemented, there are exceptions. For example, we called for all officers being outfitted with body worn cameras, to complement the dashboard cameras now mounted in each patrol vehicle. We believe such cameras will benefit both the public

and the police officer. The supervisors delayed consideration of this recommendation for important matters of budget and privacy concerns, which I believe will ultimately be overcome.

I encourage everyone who is interested to review the Police Commission recommendations progress report at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/policecommission/progressreport.htm>. In summary, you will find that 178 of the 202 recommendations (88 percent) have been approved and are either in process of being implemented or have already been implemented; 15 (7.4 percent) are still under review; and 9 (4.5 percent) have been rejected.

The evidence so far is that the deep-rooted change of the nature and spirit advocated by the commission is more achievable now than even the most optimistic expected. This noted, I caution that the transformative progress I have observed can only be sustained over time with the continued county and Police Department leadership commitment, the active involvement of the police rank and file officers and most critically continued community participation, monitoring and oversight.

Phillip Niedzielski-Eichner served as chairman of the Use of Force Subcommittee of the Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission, and continues service on the Implementation Committee.



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HOLIDAY EVENTS



Minnie Ponce of Lorton was all smiles as her daughter Mikiala Reyes sat beaming on Santa Claus' lap in the Moose Family Center. Ponce was picking up a Christmas package from the Lorton Community Action Center.



Clockwise from top right, Ja'lil, Zion, Angelo and Avery Murray visit with Santa while picking up a Christmas package of donated food and toys from the Lorton Community Action Center.

PHOTOS BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION

Christmas in Action

LCAC distributes donated food and toys to 525 families.

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

As Shareada Murray of Fairfax shepherded her four sons Ja'lil, Zion, Angelo and Avery around the Moose Family Center in Lorton, she could feel Christmas was coming.

The Murrays were among 254 families that would come through the center in the late afternoon on Dec. 18 to receive Christmas packages of donated food, toys and gift cards — all organized by the Lorton Community Action Center (LCAC).

"It means the world, we wouldn't be able to get these things without them," Murray said.

The Murrays also make use of the LCAC food pantry and donated Thanksgiving baskets. They were able to get a live Christmas tree through another local organization.

"This means everything to me," said Murray, "that my boys can have a regular Christmas. I don't know if we'd have as

much otherwise."

In 1999, LCAC executive director Linda Patterson said they served just 65 families in need.

"I think there is more need," she said, "and more people know about us."

Many of the LCAC clients who sign up for Christmas packages are not homeless and are working, "but not working enough," Patterson said.

"If they use their funds to pay rent, utilities, keep their families fed," she continued, "if this is the one thing they can't afford, if it fills in the gap, I think that's awesome."

Minnie Ponce of Lorton was all smiles as her daughter Mikiala Reyes sat beaming on Santa Claus' lap in the Moose Center.

"I don't have much work, I can't afford a lot of presents," Reyes said. "I come every year for this program; we're so thankful for it. It's really great for my children."

Patterson said volunteers from LCAC delivered packages — each contains at least two gifts per child, one to two boxes of food per family, two gift cards per teenager and grocery store gift cards — to an additional 168 families earlier in the day on the 18th. And they helped another 18 military families with food and gifts as well.

In total, Patterson said, they helped more families than with their Thanksgiving bas-

kets program, and beat last year's Christmas baskets. LCAC received around \$80,000 in non-cash donations to make it all work.

"I don't know what it is about the Lorton community," Patterson said, "but they always seem to come through, they're always very generous."

Patterson said the Friday before the baskets pickup, she knew she was short on gift cards for senior citizens they were planning to help. She sent out an email blast to LCAC supporters for help. Immediately, the gift card problem was remedied.

"We're really grateful," Patterson said. "This community always astounds me, it's heartwarming."

Jimmy Noone, current Herndon resident but formerly of Lorton, has been volunteering with LCAC and the Christmas baskets program for more than 15 years. On the 18th, he helped carry the black trash bags of presents and food to clients' cars.

"When the clients see us, they're shocked by the work we do," he said. "To see the smiles on kids' faces when they see the bags of gifts, today makes the months of planning and preparation make sense, to see the end results."

For more information, visit www.lortonaction.org.

'Saint,' 'Giant' Remembered

FROM PAGE 2

other team. "But Jamie said, 'No, it was because of me,'" said Dygve. "Everybody wants to leave a skid mark on the highway of life, but Jamie left one in our hearts. We're much better off for having known him."

Centreville's Meg Crossett, who lost her daughter Rachel to cancer at age 6, also came Saturday to honor Netschert. "I loved Jamie," she said. "He always supported me and gave me donations for childhood-cancer research. His death is a tragedy — another cancer victim."

Netschert was also the veterinarian for Diane Reddy's cats for 25 years. "He always had a smile on his face," said Reddy, of Chantilly. "He treated my cats systematically, rather than changing too many things about their care — and he was always right. He was well-loved and was a genuine individual who will certainly be missed. It's a huge loss, but we celebrate the fact that we had the pleasure of knowing him."

Fairfax's Penny Moore worked 13 years for Netschert as a veterinary technician. "He was wonderful to work for," she said. "I started there at age 26, and he and the other vet, Anna Tucker, shaped my life and my world view about kindness and the way you should treat people and animals. It's so sad; we've lost a very kind and wonderful person."

Caryn Franca, whose son Nick died of cancer at age 21, knew Netschert 35 years. "We bonded raising our daughters, and Donna and Jamie and [my husband] Jim and I even vacationed together," said Franca. "They turned into family for us."

She said the Netscherts supported her family throughout Nick's cancer journey, so she was able to offer Jamie's family some wisdom as he "crossed over. He had such an amazing attitude; he didn't stop living, but lived each day to the fullest."

"Jamie had the ability to take in everything and never judge," continued Franca. "He was benevolent and accepting of everybody. He wasn't much for chit-chat, but loved to have conversations about politics, history, the environment, the weather, animals and other things that motivated him. He and Jim had many passionate discussions, and we were both with him the day he died. He was one of the icons of Clifton; you don't think of this town without him in it."

NETSCHERT'S FAMILY started a memory book, and anyone wishing to write anything to or about him may do so at lorenasaldivar@gmail.com until the end of the year. Memorial donations may be made to the National Audubon Society.

Temple B'nai Shalom Students Build Canned Food Menorah

Hebrew School students at Temple B'nai Shalom in Fairfax Station prepared for Chanukah by building a menorah from cans of food.

The students stacked the cans on Tuesday, Dec. 13 in the temple's main worship hall. All the donated food was then sent to Lorton Community Action Center, where it will be used to help feed hungry people in the community.

"This fun and meaningful project helped the students understand that *tzedakah* (Hebrew for charitable giving) is an important part of the celebration of Chanukah," Temple B'nai Shalom executive director Lynn Richmond said in a statement. "We encourage our students and their families to make at least one of the eight nights of Chanukah a night of giving back."

This year, Chanukah begins Dec. 24 and lasts until Jan. 1, 2017.

—TIM PETERSON



PHOTO COURTESY OF FRANK KOHN

On Dec. 13, Hebrew School students at Temple B'nai Shalom in Fairfax Station prepared for Chanukah by building a menorah from canned food.

CALENDAR



The Fairfax Choral Society will hold auditions on Tuesday Jan. 3 and Monday Jan. 9 both at 7 p.m. and both taking place at Fairfax Presbyterian Church 10723 Main Street, Fairfax. Celebrating its 55th anniversary, the Symphonic Chorus, directed by Dr. Douglas Mears, will perform Hollywood Goes Choral IV with the Washington Symphonic Brass and "Ode to Joy" Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra this spring. Weekly rehearsal will be held Mondays from 7:30 - 9:50 p.m. FCS also has an award-winning youth program featuring ten ensembles at three campuses located in Annandale, Centreville, and Vienna for singers ages 5 - 19. Contact the office to schedule an audition for one of our youth choruses or our adult Symphonic Chorus 703-642-3277 or office@fairfaxchoralsociety.org

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

ONGOING

Springfield Town Center Toy Drive through Dec. 24 located at 6500 Springfield Mall, Springfield. Springfield Town Center is partnering with America's Adopt A Soldier Foundation to sponsor a Toy Drive to gather new toys to be donated to children undergoing treatment at Walter Reed Medical Center. Please bring new toys to the bin located next to Guest Services, on the Lower Level near Starbucks to donate and bring joy to a child struggling with illness during this Holiday Season.
6500 Springfield Mall, Springfield.

Bob Brown Puppets Holiday Show 10:30 a.m. Old Town Hall, 3999 University Dr, Fairfax. Join the City of Fairfax every Monday morning at 10:30am for Funday Monday. Funday Monday will offer a variety of children's activities and entertainment in Old Town Hall. Admission: Free. Sponsored by the City of Fairfax Commission on the Arts. 703-385-7858
www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts

'Storytime & Craft' at Lucy Activewear Every Friday in December at 10:30 a.m. Lucy Activewear 11899 Grand Commons Avenue, Fairfax. An opportunity to get holiday shopping done in peace. Lucy Activewear will be hosting 'Storytime & Craft.' This event is appropriate for ages 3-8. Please sign up.

Bull Run Festival of Lights and Holiday Village Nov. 23 - Jan. 8 7700 Bull Run Dr. Centreville. Every year from Thanksgiving until just after New Year's Day the Bull Run Festival of Lights will be in session. A 2.5 mile stretch will be illuminated by holiday light displays. The festival happens annually at Bull Run Regional Park in Centreville, Virginia. Drive the festival route from the comfort of your car; turn out your headlights and just follow the magical glow. After viewing the lights, bring your family and friends to the holiday village to enjoy rides, refreshments, and of course, photos with Santa Claus. The cost of driving through the light show is Mon-Thurs, \$15 per car; Fri - Sun & Holidays, \$20 per car (vans w/ 15-34 people and motorcoaches cost extra - visit website for details) Want to avoid the crowds? Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays are our busiest nights. Please take advantage of the Monday through Thursday discounted price and avoid a long wait.

"Ispirazione Italiana" Inspired by Italy Dec. 17 - Jan. 16, Bodzin Art Gallery 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. Watercolors by acclaimed

artist and J member Judy Wengrovitz and special guest artist Eliana Strauss.
sarah.berry@jccnv.org, 703-537-3075
Children's Theatre: "A Magical Christmas" Saturdays through Dec. 22, 1 p.m. Workhouse Arts Center, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. A children's theatre performance for the holidays. There's something not right in the town of Believe. Santa hasn't stopped there for many years; in fact he doesn't even know the place exists! Joy's grandfather decides to do something about it and make sure that this year's Christmas will be the most magical ever. Appropriate for all ages. Concessions available in lobby before the performance and at intermission. Cost: \$8 children, \$12 adults. workhousearts.org Cost: \$8 children, \$12 adults.

Senior Line Dancing 1 - 2 p.m. Little River Glen Senior Center 4001 Barker Ct, Fairfax. Line Dancing is a gentle, social form of aerobic activity. Studies have shown it aids in warding off Alzheimer's disease. No previous experience needed. Cost: \$5 per 8 week session.
barbriba@hotmail.com 703-524-3739

Fairfax Rotary Club Meeting. 12:15-1:30 p.m. Mondays. American Legion, 3939 Oak St., Fairfax. Meetings with luncheon and program. fairfaxrotary.org.

Carolina Shag. Wednesdays. 6:30-10 p.m. Arlington/Fairfax Elks Lodge, 8421 Arlington Blvd., Fairfax. Free lessons at 7:30 p.m. No partners needed. Dinner menu. \$8. Under 21 free. nvshag.org.

FUN-Exercise. Thursdays, noon - 12:50 p.m. Grace Presbyterian Church Family Room, 7434 Bath St., Springfield. Inova certified exercise instructor leads a moderate level exercise class with music and current events conversation. Muscle, Balance, Strength Training using stretch bands and weights both standing and seated exercises. Instructor donation is \$5.
moorefitt@yahoo.com or 703-499-6133.

EXERCISE PROGRAM Mondays and Fridays at 9:30 a.m. year-round at Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5114 Twinbrook Rd. Fairfax. The exercises are for strength, balance and maintaining limberness. Contact SCFB office at 703-426-2824 for more information.

Cafe Ivrit (Hebrew Cafe). Wednesdays. 8:15-9:15 a.m. Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. Shalom (hello) Did you always want to converse in Hebrew? Join Na'ama each week for conversational Hebrew. You will learn and practice Hebrew in a fun and interactive way while learning more about Israel. Free, however we ask that you try to attend regularly. RSVP Naama.Gold@jccnv.org.

Smoke Free Bingo (with breaks for smoking friends). 7 p.m. Every Friday. Fairfax Volunteer Fire Department, 4081 University Drive, Fairfax. Free coffee, entertaining callers, \$1,000 jackpot. www.fairfaxvd.com. 703-273-3638.

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Holiday Grief

Workshop helps others deal with loss.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

The holiday season is bittersweet for Jeanne Rorke. The days leading up to Christmas are filled with memories of her parents. Her mother committed suicide when Rorke was 12, and her father died on Christmas Eve eight years ago.

"No one really helped me through the grieving process," said Rorke, recalling her mother's death. "My family was like, 'Don't talk about it.' ... My Christmases have always been kind of sad ... even though I put on a happy face for my family."

Roarke joined about two dozen others at a workshop on handling grief during the holidays called, "Facing the Empty Chair: Surviving the Holidays after Losing a Loved One" at St. Aidan's Episcopal Church in Alexandria. From those who are preparing to celebrate a first Christmas without a loved one to those who've been grieving for decades, participants shared experiences, supported each other and gained tools for surviving the season while facing the reality of the empty chair in which their loved one once sat.

"The holidays can be time of longing for those who've lost someone," said Carey Gauzens, a licensed clinical social worker at the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia in McLean. "The holidays are a time when you reflect on family, and it's hard for someone who's aware that that person isn't there."

At the workshop, Gauzens clarified some of the misinformation surrounding grief, especially during the holidays. "First and most important, is that normal grieving is really hard for most people. Some people believe the myth that grief lasts only for a few months, but it's hard to measure your healing because it's an up and down process, not a smooth, straight line."

Throughout the process, and particularly during the holidays, being able to tap into a source of strength other than oneself is a factor that Gauzen underscores: "It's important to have a support group, friends, a therapist."

Finding someone who is also grieving can



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAREY GAUZENS

Carey Gauzens of the the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia in McLean, led a workshop on grieving during the holidays at St. Aidan's Episcopal Church in Alexandria.

be particularly helpful. For example, when Beverly Bell's husband died nine years ago following an extended illness, she found strength and comfort in a friendship with another widow.

"[We] had a wonderful relationship ... for several years following my husband's death," said Bell, who attended the workshop. "We had a regular lunch date and also shared a number of holidays. She also died a couple of years ago, and I realized that I am particularly missing her presence."

Earlier this year, Bell's brother died as well. "I found myself re-experiencing many of the feelings I had had when my husband died, [but feeling] particularly helpless to comfort my sister-in-law," she said. "Perhaps [my] presence is the most important thing I can ... offer my sister-in-law."

Some of the workshop attendees wanted to learn how to better support others. "I am a member of the Community of Hope International, a group of lay pastoral caregivers whose ministry is to visit those who are experiencing sickness, trauma, tragedy or loss of a loved one," said Caroline

McCormack, one of the participants. "I wanted to have a better understanding of the grieving process, so I might be a more compassionate listener."

She and Bell learned that process is different for everyone. "My husband's death was preceded by a long illness. My brother's death was sudden," said Bell. "I wondered if something about the timing made a difference in how we experience and cope with grief. I learned that it really does not."

"The holidays are a time when you reflect on family, and it's hard for someone who's aware that that person isn't there."

— Carey Gauzens, LCSW

"... We all experience grief in different ways and it can show up at unexpected times and places and so we need to be gentle with ourselves and find ways that we can express our grief in ways that feel healing and safe for us," added Revered Elizabeth Rees, Associate Rector, St. Aidan's Episcopal Church.

This is a point Gauzens tried to underscore: Grieving is an individual process and there is no one-size-fits-all method for coping. Even people who are grieving for the same person can experience it differently and have different needs. "For example, one person might want to talk about the loss, but others might not," she said. "It's important to be sensitive to family members who grieve differently and compromise so that each person feels emotionally safe."

Cultivating self-awareness and knowing what is normal to expect while one is grieving is important. "Sometimes the symptoms are so intense it makes people feel like they're going crazy and frightens them sometimes," said Gauzens. "They might cry at the drop of a hat, get angry or feel unable to control their emotions. There could become deeply distracted or confused like get lost going someplace they know well."

"Give yourself permission to make careful decisions about how you'll spend your time," she added. "It's helpful to discern within yourself what feels right. Decide whether to maintain holiday traditions or do something completely different."

Avoiding all festive, social activities might do more harm than good, however. "A person who's grieving might end up isolating because they won't go to places they once went to with the person they've lost," said Gauzens.

Instead, Gauzens suggests planning "something to look forward to after the holiday to reward yourself for getting through the holidays."

She also stressed the need for self-care, including exercising, eating healthy and staying hydrated. "It's important to minimize your use of mood altering substances like alcohol," said Gauzens. "It's tempting to try to numb the pain, but it comes back."

Changing customs can make holidays less painful, says Dr. Linda Gulyn, Ph.D., professor of psychology, Marymount University in Arlington. "I like to break with traditions that are familiar and that remind us of the loved one we lost," she said. "Sometimes it's good to shake it up and start a new tradition, so you're looking forward instead of behind you."

"The days are darker and colder, which exacerbates any sadness that we might be feeling anyway," said Gulyn. "Hang in there. It will feel better and you will get through it. The holidays will go by and we'll get back into our routine and productive lives that help with healing."

There is a point however, when assistance from a mental health professional is a necessary, Jerome Short, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology, George Mason University in Fairfax. "People should seek professional help if they have significant distress and difficulty in daily self-care and functioning at home or work that has lasted more than two weeks without improvement," he said. "Common symptoms for depression are low mood, lack of pleasure in previously enjoyable activities, social isolation, and thoughts of hopelessness and helplessness."

Free Holiday Cab Rides Help Prevent Drunk Driving

Combating that holiday period which the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says is a "dangerous time to be on the road due to a high number of drunk drivers behind the wheel," a local nonprofit organization will offer free cab rides to would-be drunk drivers throughout the Washington-metropolitan area during the winter holidays.

Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), operates the annual Holiday SoberRide program between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. each evening between Friday, Dec. 16, 2016 and Sunday, Jan. 1, 2017 as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers during this traditionally high-risk, holiday period.

During the evening hours, between Dec. 16 and Jan. 1, Washington-metropolitan area residents celebrating with alcohol

may call the toll-free SoberRide phone number 1-800-200-TAXI and be afforded a no-cost (up to \$30 fare), safe way home.

"Last December, nearly 1,500 (1,456) Greater Washington residents did the right thing and availed themselves of this lifesaving service rather than possibly driving home impaired," said Kurt Gregory Erickson, WRAP's president. "For SoberRide's hours of operation during just

last New Year's Eve, alone, such ridership (580) translated into the removal of a would-be drunk driver from our shared roadways every 49-seconds."

Since 1993, WRAP's SoberRide program has provided 65,385 free cab rides home to would-be drunk drivers in the Greater Washington area.

More information about WRAP's SoberRide initiative can be found at www.soberride.com.

Leaving 'a Lifetime of Memories'

FROM PAGE 2

lunch, over the phone, and told me, 'I could be dead by Christmas,'" said Donna. "Then he went back to work. He had the same cancer as President Jimmy Carter, and the doctor told Jamie, if there was anything he wanted to do, to do it."

Netschert was treated at the Lombardi Cancer Center at Georgetown University Medical Center, but didn't have traditional radiation or chemotherapy. "The quality and length of his life were improved and extended by new immunotherapies to stimulate his own, immune system to fight the cancer," explained Donna. "Combined with Cyberknife radiation – robotic, targeted radiation just hitting the bad stuff – it was the magic bullet for Jamie for two years."

But, she said, his cancer kept mutating and, at some point, "It just broke through. They tried new drugs, but they didn't work, and the side effects were terrible. In the end, his body just wore out. The last couple months, we knew the end was coming, but all Jamie wanted to do was get back to work; he'd had to stop working Oct. 15."

All his life, said Donna, Netschert was always planning for their next adventure. "We were looking forward to Christmas and had a trip booked to Hawaii for the end of January," she said. "We were hoping for



Jamie Netschert and daughter Caroline at a family friend's wedding.

another year of decent health, but it wasn't to be."

TOWARD THE END, tumors had spread throughout his body. The cancer and stress took their toll on him, and he was frail and tired. "He was leaving me, one day at a time," said his wife. "And I was saying goodbye to him, one day at a time. In the last couple weeks, when we knew we were running out of treatment options, he said, 'I love my life and I love my wife, and I don't want to leave.'"

Netschert was able to eat a bit on Thanksgiving and visit with their dinner guests. But two days later, he had trouble standing and



**PHOTOS COURTESY OF DONNA NETSCHERT
Caroline, Jamie and Donna Netschert on Thanksgiving 2014.**

was rushed to Inova Fair Oaks Hospital. "I asked him, 'Do you know what's happening?' and he nodded," said Donna. "And I told him, 'You've been a great friend and a great husband and I love you.'"

He was then discharged and returned home where, three days later, he died. "He was going to sleep and his heart just stopped," said his wife. "Initially, I was relieved he wasn't suffering anymore. But now, I'm completely numb; it still hasn't hit me, yet."

Meanwhile, she has a lifetime of memories to comfort her. "I'll always remember Jamie at Cambridge on his bicycle with a backpack," said Donna. "And in New



**BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION
Jamie and Donna Netschert were part of the Clifton Candlelight Homes Tour in December 2013.**

Zealand, with the biggest camera, photographing birds. Playing basketball, hugging people, making beer every Saturday morning, working in his garden and reading the New York Times on Sundays. He loved music – everything from rock to classical – animals and people. He loved his life and did not want to die."

The night of Nov. 29, she wrote on Facebook, "He was a prince among men. There will never be another you."

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Deputy Cleared in Fatal Shooting

FROM PAGE 3

charges are warranted, the Sheriff's Office will conduct an administrative investigation."

Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock) chairs the Board of Supervisors Public Safety Committee, which has recently voted to establish an office of independent police auditor to review all use of force cases, as well as a civilian review panel to look at complaints of police misconduct.

Cook's office declined to comment on Morrogh's decision.

Cook previously commented that while the Sheriff's office doesn't fall under the administrative purview of the supervisors, they have been invited to present and field questions related to recommendations for policy changes from the Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission at the Public Safety Committee Meeting in March 2017.

Board of Supervisors chairman Sharon Bulova did not respond to a request for comment before print time.

Fairfax County Chief of Police Col. Edwin Roessler Jr. said FCPD had been made aware of Morrogh's decision. "The Sheriff's Office was fully cooperative with our detectives throughout the process," Roessler said in a statement.

Author and blogger Pete Earley of Fairfax was a member of the Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission and that group's mental health subcommittee.

In response to Morrogh's report, Earley said in a statement he was concerned that it failed to answer basic questions about the encounter "that would reassure Fairfax residents with mental illnesses that they are safe when seeking help."

Earley raised a number of issues, including whether Gomez's doctor and Spanish-speaking nurse were qualified to diagnose psychiatric issues; why there is no mention of Gomez being observed by a psychiatrist despite Inova having a psychiatric unit; the

way in which the nurse questioned Gomez about his psychiatric condition; and what about Gomez's behavior after being discharged prompted the security guard to approach him.

"Just as we were told in the Natasha McKenna case, the reason why Mr. Gomez was fatally shot was entirely his own fault [according to the report]," Earley says. "Blaming an individual with a mental illness is an easy out. Asking tough questions about why a man who sought help from the police and ended up dead hours later is much more difficult and, sadly, this report appears to have failed to ask and answer those questions."

Natasha McKenna, 37, of Alexandria died in February 2015 after being tased multiple times by Sheriff's deputies who were trying to restrain her and transport her to the Alexandria jail. McPartlin was among that group of deputies.

McKenna, police said, had a history of diagnosed mental illness including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and depression. In McKenna's case as well, Morrogh made the decision none of the deputies were criminally liable.

Cayce Utley is a lead organizer for the organization Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Northern Virginia that has demonstrated over the Gomez shooting and McKenna's death.

"Commonwealth Attorney Ray Morrogh and Police Chief Ed Roessler have made it clear they have no interest in holding Stacey Kincaid's sheriff's deputies responsible when they kill people," Utley said in a statement. Natasha McKenna and [Yovani Gomez] deserve justice and we will keep pressing Fairfax County until this racist policing is stopped. We are tired of watching this county celebrate so-called 'reforms' that leave all the power in police hands. It's time for Fairfax to be accountable to the people who live and work here."

BULLETIN BOARD

Send notes to the Connection at connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/ or call 703-778-9416. The deadline for submissions is the Friday prior to publication. Dated announcements should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event.

SUNDAY/DEC. 25

5th Annual Christmas Day Giving Back Event 1 - 5 p.m. Kilroys Ravensworth Shopping Center 5236 Port Royal Road, Springfield. Volunteers needed join us in saying thank you to our veterans and deployed service members for their service and sacrifices. We will be packing care packages and letters to our veterans. www.americasadoptsoldier.org

TUESDAY JAN. 24

ESL Classes Begin on January 24 in Fairfax and Clifton

Lord of Life Lutheran Church will offer beginning, intermediate and advanced ESL classes at their Fairfax and Clifton locations. The course will take place between January 24 and April 6, 2017 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 7:00

p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Lord of Life Lutheran Church located in Fairfax at 5114 Twinbrook Road and in Clifton at 13421 Twin Lakes Drive. The registration deadline is Thursday, January 19, 2017. There is a registration fee of \$15 and the text book costs \$25. For more information, please visit: www.lordoflifeva.org or call (703) 323-9500.

ONGOING

Reminder Crime Prevention - Please contact the Fairfax County Police Department at 703-691-2131 (non-emergency) to report ANY suspicious activity, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem at the time. It is better if police reports can be called in while the suspicious activity is in progress to the extent possible.

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.

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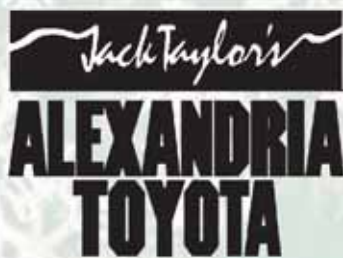
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