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PHOTO BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION



From left, Loretta Trowen of West Springfield, Charles Dyer of Fairfax Station and Cathy Miller of Fairfax rode in the first Tour de Mount Vernon on New Year's Eve.

Tour de Mount Vernon

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Police Auditor and Civilian Review Panel to Become Reality in 2017

Body cameras, mental health part of public safety focus.

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

This year will see two historic firsts for Fairfax County, its police department and citizens: the beginning work of an Office of Police Auditor and Civilian Review Panel. The auditor will review police use of force cases and internal investigations of those incidents, while the panel will review other citizen complaints of police misconduct and abuse of power.

Both bodies were recommendations from the Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission, a panel created by Board of Supervisors chairman Sharon Bulova largely in response to public frustration and anger over the lack of transparency and accountability after the 2013 shooting of unarmed Springfield man John Geer in the doorway of his home by then-Fairfax County Police officer Adam Torres.

A committee appointed by Bulova is reviewing six candidates who topped the applicants list.



PHOTOS BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION

Randy Sayles (left) with Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission and subcommittee members John Lovaas, Phil Niedzielski-Eichner and George Becerra said he is very optimistic both the auditor's office and civilian review panel will be beneficial to the supervisors, police and citizens.

For the civilian review panel, invitations to nominate members have been sent to dozens of community groups, including minority organizations, disability services, interfaith groups and others that were part of the Election Process Improvement Commission. Each supervisor may also make nominations. Public Safety Committee chair supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock) said the

full board will review all the nominations in closed session Feb. 14.

Supervisor Pat Herryty (R-Springfield) fully supported the auditor position but has been critical of the need for a civilian review panel — he was the only supervisor to vote against its creation.

Looking ahead at 2017 though, Herryty said “my expectation and hope for both is they’re going to confirm our police department is doing a very good job.”

Randy Sayles of Oak Hill was a member of the Use of Force subcommittee of the Ad Hoc Commission. Sayles spent more than 35 years in law enforcement with the Denver Police Department and Drug Enforcement Administration. He said he is very optimistic both the auditor's office and civilian review panel will be beneficial to the supervisors, police and citizens.

Sayles said from what he's seen, “There's a sense there can be real improvement and transparency, not just lip service.”

In choosing the members of the panel, Sayles said it's crucial the supervisors go

with people who won't allow bias to corrupt the review process.

“It's very important people picked deal with facts, demand facts and make decisions based on facts,” Sayles said, “and communicate those in a way that's not divisive.

“Try to get a diversity of people,” Sayles said. “But ultimately, pick people who are willing to be fair, no matter what. It can be a difficult thing to do.”

ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT AND CONTENTIOUS RECOMMENDATION from the Ad Hoc commission is the implementation of police officer-worn body cameras. Herryty said the supervisors are set to approve a new pilot program this month.

“They are absolutely important,” Herryty said. “This is something our police department supports, our citizens support. We should go ahead and get it done now.”

Herryty said the estimated cost for getting body cameras up and running on police in Fairfax County is \$30 million. The pilot, he said, will last for several months. He's asked that it include two different vendors and be done at stations in two magisterial districts.

SUPERVISOR COOK said another public safety priority is taking next steps with the Diversion First program, which is set up to prevent people with mental illness or developmental disabilities from going to jail for nonviolent offenses.

Coordinating more with the court system is an important issue, Cook said.

“We really need a sea change in how we think about mental illness,” said Cook, “to recognize it serves a public safety purpose as well to get people treatment. If you just throw them in jail, 80 percent of the time, something else happens, they're going back in.”

The next meeting of the board's Public Safety Committee is scheduled for Jan. 31 at 3 p.m. at the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway in Fairfax.



Public Safety Committee chair supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock), left, said the full board will review all the nominations in closed session Feb. 14.



Supervisor Pat Herryty (R-Springfield) fully supported the auditor position but has been critical of the need for a civilian review panel — he was the only supervisor to vote against its creation.



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Right, Supervisor Dan Storck (D-Mount Vernon) meets with Captain Derrick Penny of Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Station 37 Kingstowne during the first-ever Tour de Mount Vernon bike ride.



Though the group had splintered somewhat during the Tour de Mount Vernon ride, they reconvened at the Workhouse around 12:30 p.m., just over 20 miles pedaling from the starting point.

Tour de Mount Vernon Supervisor Storck leads inaugural cross-district bike ride.

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

When Carlos Alfaro of the Woodlawn area of Mount Vernon showed up New Year's Eve morning at the Belle Haven Marina parking lot with his road bike, he didn't know what to expect. Neither did supervisor Dan Storck (D-Mount Vernon), who organized the magisterial district-spanning group ride he advertised as "Tour de Mount Vernon."

"I wanted to get a ride in this year," Storck told a group of 20 to 30 riders, himself bundled up in several layers and a neon green high-visibility jacket. The objective, Storck said, was to tour some of the trails and roadways running through Mount Vernon District, and along the way discuss some of the near to distant development plans for the area.

Storck said at least 40 had registered for the event through a website sent out by his office, though with the cold and the holiday weekend, he was uncertain of what attendance would be. Seeing the turnout, Storck said he couldn't have been happier.

Fitness watches beeping and gears clicking, riders departed from Belle Haven around 9:45 a.m. heading south on the trail along the George Washington Memorial Highway.

After following the curve at the entrance to George Washington's Mount Vernon estate, riders kept following the Mount Vernon Trail. Pausing after a particularly craggy stretch of paved path, Storck and half a dozen riders stopped and talked informally.

Storck said he was aware of that trail and others that could greatly benefit from repaving, which he may be able to assist with money available for road repairs.

The supervisor said having passable trails for bikes and foot traffic is incredibly important for not only neighbor-to-neighbor community-building, but also connecting what he called significant "cultural sites"



From left, Loretta Trowen of West Springfield, Charles Dyer of Fairfax Station and Cathy Miller of Fairfax rode in the first Tour de Mount Vernon on New Year's Eve.

for visitors, including the Mount Vernon Estate, the National Museum of the U.S. Army and Arcadia Farm on the historic Woodlawn Estate.

ARCADIA is already functioning as a demonstration farm and base for a veteran farmer training program. The Army Museum is still several years from opening but when completed will span 80 acres in the Fort Belvoir area and exhibit rare artifacts, documents and images, as well as an experiential learning center.

In addition to community members, Storck had invited a number of county staff and government officials on the ride to get a first-hand look at situations needing attention, like the rocky trail.

Bikers continued on to Jeff Todd Way, jogging north to Telegraph Road and a mettle-challenging hill. At the top of the hill, however, volunteers were waiting at the

Kingstowne Station 37 of Fairfax County Fire & Rescue with water bottles. The group took a brief break to warm up, use the bathroom and meet with station Captain Derrick Penny.

The group followed Telegraph southwest toward Lorton, eventually turning right on to Lorton Road after a brief jog on Richmond Highway.

They took Lorton Road past the work entrance for Liberty Crest at Laurel Hill, a \$188 million project that's redeveloping former Lorton prison structures on 80 acres for residential and commercial use.

Bikers followed Lorton Road to a short jog on the Gerry Connolly Cross County Trail before continuing on Workhouse Road and taking the redone entrance to the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton.

Staff from Storck's office and other volunteers were waiting outside the Workhouse's main building with hot choco-

late, water bottles and energy bars.

Though the group had splintered somewhat during the ride, they reconvened at the Workhouse around 12:30 p.m. just over 20 miles pedaling from the starting point.

Alfaro said that despite the cold, the sun had come out and the ride was "totally worth it."

"I've lived in this area most all of my life," Alfaro said, "and it's the first time I've biked here."

Alfaro said it was the first time he'd explored this much of the county by bike and he was already looking forward to Storck's next tour.

Charlie Dyer of Fairfax Station is a member of the Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling and Potomac Pedalers organizations.

Dyer said he especially liked the new Lorton Road extension, which he called "pretty, and doable."

"I'm thrilled to see the redevelopment, or development, on this end of the county," Dyer said. Loretta Trowen of West Springfield said she was similarly thrilled to see a supervisor take such an engaged approach with biking.

"I'm here to support someone who's supportive of biking," she said.

Like Alfaro, Cathy Miller of Fairfax, was excited to find some new routes for getting from Point A to Point B, and to get out and see friends on New Year's Eve. Miller is also a member of FABB.

WITH 20 MILES IN THE BOOKS, some riders took alternate transportation back to Belle Haven while others continued on to different destinations.

Those remaining largely followed the same route back to the start point, completing just over 40 miles in the saddle.

Storck said again he was encouraged by the turnout, and intends to use this first Tour de Mount Vernon as a learning experience for engaging more of the community and scheduling more similar rides in the future.

PHOTOS BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION

New Year, New Superintendent for County Schools

Budget shortfall, equity and nondiscrimination storylines for 2017.

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

With the passing of 2016, Fairfax County Public Schools also waved goodbye to its highly influential superintendent Dr. Karen Garza. Garza, who came to FCPS in July 2013 and is largely credited with the titanic achievements of bringing full-day Mondays to elementary schools, pushing back high school start times and pushing through a \$2.7 billion school budget for FY 2017, announced her resignation in September last year. It took effect in December.

Garza's temporary replacement is Dr. Steven Lockard, who has worked as deputy superintendent for FCPS since August 2014.

The school board has already hired the same recruiting firm that brought them Garza as a candidate, Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates, and the search is on.

As with Garza's recruitment, there will be town hall meetings, community meetings, online portals for feedback and opportunities to meet in person with the final candidates.

Pat Hynes, who represents Hunter Mill on the school board, said the search could take up to three months, with the goal being having a new superintendent in place by May or June of this year.

The budget will once again be a major storyline for the school system, as Hynes said the board is currently looking at about a \$90 million shortfall for FY 2018.

Hynes lamented the voting down of a proposed meals tax that would have brought the school system an estimated \$67 million that would have gone to investing in teacher salary scale and other long term investments. "Those things are on the block right now," said Hynes.

A citizen budget task force is being re-engaged to go over the work of a previous task force and look for any and all possibilities of trimming to make up that \$90 million.

"That's the conversation we've been having with the community," Hynes said. "Unless that shortfall gets a lot smaller, it's a hard nut to swallow."

George Becerra of Burke is an FCPS parent and actively engaged with both school system and county-wide issues, sitting on a subcommittee of the Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission.

"The reality is this year, the schools will not get what they're asking for," Becerra said. "When do we start having a conversation of programs over taking money away from teachers?"

Becerra suggests starting evaluating programs that have an abundance of students. "Forget the name, is it doing what it's supposed to be doing?" he said. "How do you know the money going to it is actually producing results?"



The school board has already hired the same recruiting firm that brought them Dr. Karen Garza as a superintendent candidate, Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates, and the search is on. As with Garza's recruitment, there will be town hall meetings, community meetings, online portals for feedback and opportunities to meet in person with the final candidates.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Former Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Karen Garza proposed a \$2.67 billion school system budget for FY 2017 that emphasized increasing employee compensation and decreasing class sizes — all without making any further cuts.

Public Forums on Superintendent Search

Share thoughts and ideas for ideal superintendent characteristics at ten community meetings in January. A survey for online submissions will be posted Jan. 9 at www.fcps.edu.

- ❖ **Monday, Jan. 9**, 1 p.m., Gatehouse Administration Center, room 1600, 8115 Gatehouse Road, Falls Church, VA 22042.
- ❖ **Monday, Jan. 9**, 7 p.m., South County High School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Lorton, VA 22079.
- ❖ **Tuesday, Jan. 10**, 12:30 p.m., Virginia Hills Center Library, 6520 Diana Lane, Alexandria, VA 22310.
- ❖ **Wednesday, Jan. 11**, noon, Providence District Office and Community Center, multipurpose room 2, 3001 Vaden Drive, Fairfax, VA 22031.
- ❖ **Wednesday, Jan. 11**, 7 p.m., Mount Vernon High School Little Theater, 8515 Old Mount Vernon Road, Alexandria, VA 22309.
- ❖ **Tuesday, Jan. 17**, 11 a.m., Herndon Council Chambers, 765 Lynn Street, Herndon, VA 20170.
- ❖ **Tuesday, Jan. 17**, 1 p.m., Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke, VA 22015.
- ❖ **Tuesday, Jan. 17**, 7 p.m., Stuart High School Little Theater, 3301 Peace Valley Lane, Falls Church, VA 22044.
- ❖ **Tuesday, Jan. 17**, 7 p.m., Chantilly High School Lecture Hall, 4201 Stringfellow Road, Chantilly, VA 20151.
- ❖ **Wednesday, Jan. 18**, 7 p.m., Langley High School Auditorium, 6520 Georgetown Pike, McLean, VA 22101.

IN ADDITION TO THAT CONVERSATION of programs, Mount Vernon representative to the school board Karen Corbett Sanders says another major topic for 2017 is discussion of ensuring consistency of programs from school to school.

"We started down this path with homework and grading policy last year," she said.

"What does equity really mean," Corbett Sanders continued. "We're going to have some healthful discussions about it. Everything from early education on."

Hynes said to help address the challenge of equity, the school system is planning to hire an assistant superintendent for innovation and equity.

"Looking at equity really is a systemic thing," said Hynes. "It has to be top-down, it has to be part of how you deliver curriculum in every building."

Hynes and Becerra agree the county's three and four level Advanced Academic Centers in only select elementary and middle schools, which require testing and choice by parents to introduce the problem of equity.

Then in high school there are honors, advanced placement, international baccalaureate and general education classes. "The reality is by then kids are sorted," Hynes said. "They've been sorted through our system and remain sorted in high school. And then there are parts of the county where advanced and challenging work isn't even available at all to kids."

THE TOPIC OF GENDER IDENTITY figures to continue to be a contentious one this year in Fairfax County Public Schools, as it is around the country. Over the last two school years, the board voted to add sexual orientation and gender identity — generally understood as the sex that someone feels or intrinsically identifies with relative to their sex at birth — to the FCPS nondiscrimination policy for students and faculty.

Opponents of the change say the board acted outside its authority, and did so to follow a directive from President Obama, who some say was acting outside his authority to hold schools accountable to make such changes.

A lawsuit against the school board over this issue is pending at the state level, but Hynes emphasized that Policy 1450 as it stands is still in place.

A set of regulations for implementing the nondiscrimination policy was sent to the board from school system staff in 2016, but tabled indefinitely.

Hynes said the regulations are meant as guidance for consistency, as for principals addressing an issue for the first time such as student who identifies as transgender.

"They've been doing it school by school, kid by kid," said Hynes. "The bottom line is everyone has the opportunity for privacy."

It's not known whether the board will take up the regulations again. But, as Hynes said, opponents of the policy can push school board members to put it back up for a vote.

PEOPLE

Preparing for Inauguration

Clifton native Petty Officer 1st Class Christopher Buchanan (Navy) has been busy in Washington, D.C. preparing for the Presidential Inauguration. He is one of a very few select participants chosen for his dedication and service to this country and commander in chief. Petty Officer Buchanan is a military musician who represents the United States at various ceremonies to include but not limited to honor ceremonies, funerals, and community relation concerts.



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OPINION

Unsung Heroes of Police Reform

Personal involvement of Culosi, Beltrante key to success of police commission.

The call for reform and transparency in Fairfax County Police began long before the shooting death of John Geer in August 2013. Some members of the Fairfax County Police Practices Review Commission pressed for reform for nearly a decade before the formation of the commission. Their experience also should answer any question about whether reform was really needed.

Anita and Sal Culosi lost their son Dr. Salvatore "Sal" Culosi Jr. when he was killed by a Fairfax County Police officer Jan. 24, 2006 outside his Fair Oaks townhouse by a SWAT team member executing a search warrant. Police knew Culosi was unarmed and did not consider him dangerous. The shooting was ruled an accident and the officer faced no charges.

"My son would still be alive today," Culosi said at the first meeting of the commission in March 2015, "but for 2006 Fairfax County policies to routinely use SWAT and aggressive procedures against citizens certified to be low risk."

Culosi Sr. told members of the commission that David M. Rohrer told him that use of force policy changes had been made since his son's shooting, but that Rohrer declined to give him copies of the changes or tell him exactly what changes were made. Rohrer, now deputy county executive for public safety was Fairfax County police chief when Culosi Jr. was killed.

As the commission began its work, Police Chief Edwin Roessler and Rohrer among others, embraced Sal Culosi Sr.'s involvement, and worked with him on many details of policy changes ranging from how SWAT teams are deployed to "ready gun position." New policies



PHOTO BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION

Sal Culosi (left), father of Dr. Salvatore "Sal" Culosi Jr., who was killed by a Fairfax County Police officer in 2006, and Nicholas Beltrante (right), executive director of the Virginia Citizens Coalition for Police Accountability, attend the first meeting of the Fairfax County Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission in March 2015

were developed with his input, are available to the public and mark significant improvements.

NICHOLAS R. BELTRANTE, a retired D.C. homicide detective and Mount Vernon resident, founded Virginia Citizens Coalition for Police Accountability in 2010 in response to the shooting death of unarmed David A. Masters who was shot and killed by a Fairfax County Police officer on Richmond Highway and Fort Hunt Road on Nov. 13, 2009. Masters, a former U.S. Army Green Beret, struggled with mental health issues.

Beltrante decried the secrecy surrounding the Masters and Culosi cases among others, and began advocating for the formation of a civilian review panel.

He wrote to the Connection in 2012:

"During the years 2010-2011, the CCPA has

directed a number of letters to Chief David M. Rohrer regarding these and other citizen allegations of police abuse, misconduct, and negligence. These letters have gone unanswered. As a result the CCPA began in January 2012 mailing letters of complaint to Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova with the understanding they would be forwarded to Supervisor Gerald W. Hyland, the board's Public Safety Committee chairman, for appropriate action. In recent weeks the CCPA has written to Supervisor Hyland in an effort to determine what action, if any, he had taken. To-date, we have not heard from Supervisor Hyland.

"The apparent lack of accountability by various entities of the Fairfax County Government regarding these serious issues has caused many citizens grave concern and some have expressed their frustration by indicating their belief this may constitute a case of malfeasance."

Beltrante noted that no one, including the families of the deceased victims, had been able to obtain a police incident report despite the fact that the four cases were closed.

The establishment of a civilian review panel and an independent police auditor, both approved last year by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, plus changes in policies about use of force, transparency and crisis intervention, among many others, are major accomplishments.

The Culosis and Beltrante began the call for such changes many years before the death of John Geer. Geer's best friend, Jeff Stewart, also served on the Ad Hoc Commission. Stewart was present on the scene when his friend was shot dead. Stewart's voice was also critical on the commission. The personal involvement of these families and individuals in the process, plus the new openness of leadership in the FCPD, made all the difference.

— MARY KIMM

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A Program That Changed My Life

My experience with High School Diplomats at Princeton.

BY CHRISTIAN SCHWIEN
WT WOODSON HIGH SCHOOL.

Last summer, I participated in a program that changed my life. This program is called High School Diplomats. It is a ten-day cross-cultural exchange between 40 American and 40 Japanese students at Princeton. It is completely financed by the Japanese insurance company AIU and the Freeman Foundation. The program gives these students the opportunity to immerse into another culture and establish long-lasting relationships with other students from another country. The staff, all previous members of High School Diplomats,

set up dances, activities, and talks for the students to participate in. High School Diplomats does an amazing job of breaking students out of their shell to talk about their worldview.

High School Diplomats pairs up every American student with a Japanese student to be their roommate. Roommates do everything together, including eating, walking, and all activities. This program almost forces you to become close with your roommate, in an awesome way. Most Japanese students speak very good English, so getting by the language barrier was easy for most roommate pairs. If not, then the roommates had to figure out another way of communication. My roommate, Shu, was an extremely caring student from the Chiba Prefecture near Tokyo, who really loved Taylor Swift. Shu and I shared a lot of laughs, experiences, talks, and feelings. Every day there has a theme, so Shu and I dressed up in a lot of amusing costumes together, too.

There is a homestay period, as well, where

the Japanese students take a break from touring to come and stay at their roommate's homes for three days before HSD takes place. Because many of the American students don't live in the D.C. Metro area, their roommates stay with another family from HSD. My family hosted my roommate, Shu, and another boy from Japan, named Yuma. We took Shu and Yuma all around the D.C. area, to places including the US Naval Academy, Six Flags, the Mosaic District, Wegmans, and more. The Japanese students had already toured the District of Columbia, so we decided not to take our students there. Japan does not have giant grocery stores there, so we thought it was fun to take them to Wegmans. We also used this time to prepare for the High School Diplomat Program itself.

As I mentioned before, every day has a theme, and many of them are based off of American or Japanese holidays. These days

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Memories of Summer at Princeton

FROM PAGE 6

include HSD spirit day, Bunka-No-Hi or Japanese Day of Culture, Independence Day, Rock Star Night, Day of Thanks (Thanksgiving), Halloween, HSD Olympics, and more. The American roommate brings a costume for themselves and their Japanese roommate, excluding the Japanese Day of Culture, which the Japanese student brings an outfit for the American student. Every day Shu and I dressed up in our costumes, which I have to say were pretty sweet. On Independence Day we each had a Naval Academy shirt on with American flag bandanas and socks on. We wore my dad's old Army uniforms for Halloween, and we went country western for Rock Star Night. On Japanese Day of Culture, Shu brought Jimbos for both of us to wear. One day consisted of free day and date night, where the students could explore the town of Princeton with their roommates, and were then paired up with a student of the opposite gender from the other country for date night! This was especially fun because the Japanese students do not have prom or homecoming, so you could see them experience something very new and exciting.

Every day had activities that went along with the costume. At the Japanese Festival we learned about traditional Japanese customs, including dancing, calligraphy, and

martial arts. On Halloween we watched scary movies and the staff set up a haunted house. Theme day activities were not all we did every day though. We also had classes and presentations. Every student was paired up with four other students to create a presentation about government, education, regional characteristics, or social issues in their country. My group was assigned to present about government and we explained how our government and political system works. The most interesting thing about the presentations, though, was learning about Japanese life and worldview through their presentations. Many Americans view the Japanese people as very homogenous, but that could not be farther from the truth. Every student is unique and has their own worldview.

We had classes most weekdays, too. American teachers taught the Japanese students, while Japanese teachers taught the American students. I, not knowing any Japanese, was put into the beginner course. Every class is three hours long, with one half of the class consisting of learning the Japanese language, and one half consisting of learning about Japanese culture. The language classes are not hard at all, but they teach the students a basic understanding of Japanese language. The culture class is much more fun, though, because the teachers teach you one aspect of the others culture. I got to learn sushi mak-

ing, origami, calligraphy, and participate in a traditional Japanese tea ceremony while at these classes.

The most important activity at HSD took place during a day called Paula Chow Diplomat talks. Every student, along with their roommate, was put into a group with other roommate pairs to talk about a specific issue. Last year, being the thirtieth anniversary of High School Diplomats, the issue was US-Japanese relations. They played a series of three videos, each debating a specific issue, and then had the students talk about the meaning of the issue after each video. The first video was about respecting cultural heritage, the second about whether weapons and war is sometimes necessary, and the third was the video of President Obama's speech at Hiroshima. It was very interesting and touching to see the students, both American and Japanese, talking about issues that affect the US and Japan. Hearing Japanese students speak openly about their views on nuclear warfare was especially touching.

Not only did my experience in High School Diplomats teach me about Japan and its culture and customs, but it also taught me about myself. HSD taught me to be more extroverted and talk to people that I don't know. It taught me that people from other countries and culture can be similar to me. It taught me to have an open mind when



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Christian Schwiens of WT Woodson High School with his Japanese classmate in High School Diplomats program at Princeton.

talking about issues. It taught me that others care about my worldview. It taught me that the Japanese people are not homogenous at all, and that each and every one of them has their own view on issues and problems that face the world today. HSD was the best ten days of my life, and I hope that more students chose to apply to this wonderful program next year.

On top of all of this, the program after HSD, called USHSD, takes twenty of the forty American students from the previous HSD year on an all expense paid trip to Japan. This includes a week and a half of touring around Japan, and a week and a half of cultural exchange. Next year, HSD is taking place from July 25 to Aug. 5, 2017. The deadline for the application is Jan. 8, 2017. For more information about the High School Diplomats program visit: <http://www.highschooldiplomats.com/america.php>.

SCHOOL NOTES

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

Katherine Hough, Fairfax Station, has been awarded the Boeing Scholarship for outstanding academic achievement in the Volgenau School of Engineering at George Mason University.

Vocal musicians from 12 Fairfax County public schools have been named to the Virginia Honors Choir for 2016. This select choir is open only to the top 125 singers from around the Commonwealth of Virginia, and is the highest honor a choir student can attain during his or her high school career. Thirty-one Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) students were selected for the choir, and five students were named as alternates. The choir will perform at the Virginia Music Educators Association (VMEA) convention to be held at the Omni Homestead Resort in Hot Springs, Nov. 17-19. FCPS students named to the 2016 Virginia Honors Choir include the following students from our area schools: **Woodson High School:** Megan Humes, Caroline Grass, Jacob Lamb, Lucas Valdes, and Marc Manaloto and **Hayfield Secondary School:** Jessica Pressley.

Jonathan Whittington, Kathryn Herring, Emma Zettlemoyer, of Springfield; **Bridget Ray and Kirsten Chase**, of Burke; received \$2,000 scholarships from the Scholarship for Military Children Program in July 2016.

Jane Gibbins-Harding, of Springfield, was named to the dean's list at Bethany College for spring 2016.

U.S. Air Force Airman **Brian A.**

Zamfino graduated from basic military training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, San Antonio, Texas. Zamfino is the son of Joanne and Joseph Zamfino of Springfield. He is a 2015 graduate of West Springfield High School.

Thomas Miskimins, of Fairfax, graduated with a master of arts, in Spring 2016 from the University of New Haven.

Jordan Ecker, of Fairfax, is on the spring 2016 dean's list at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.

Caroline Dickson, of Fairfax, is on the spring 2016 dean's list at the University of Maine-Orono.

Allison Righter Moore, and Sarah Ann Hughes Cushing-Spiller, of Springfield, is on the dean's list at Hollins University, for the 2016 spring semester.

James Butler, a Lake Braddock Secondary School graduate, was inducted into the Naval Academy Class of 2020 on June 30, 2016.

Kyle Austin Walsh, of Fairfax, and **Abigail Lynn Lackey**, of Springfield, were named to the honors list for the 2016 spring 2016 semester at Averett University in Danville.

Katherine Marie Hough, of Fairfax Station, is on the dean's list at George Mason University for spring 2016.

Anna Kormis, of Springfield, graduated from Emory and Henry College in spring 2016.

Kyle Austin Walsh, of Fairfax, graduated from Averett University in June 2016. was among the 261 students to receive diplomas during Averett University's May 7 Commencement.

Megan R. Seymour, Megan F. Cummins, Thomas S. Cohen, of Fairfax, **Joshua D. Harlowe, Samantha E. Kinde, Melissa A. Schwartz**, of Springfield; **Sean C. Baird**, of Fairfax Station; graduated from Boston University in spring 2016.

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WELLBEING

Keeping Resolutions

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Every January for the last five years Faye Ripke has resolved to lose weight and lead a healthier lifestyle. However, the only thing she has to show for it, she says, is a trail of unused gym memberships and a wardrobe of clothes that have increased in size.

"Both of my parents died from heart attacks," says Ripke, 57 of Fairfax Station. "My doctor keeps telling me that I need to do more aerobic exercise to get my heart rate up every day and drop about 75 pounds."

Losing weight, getting organized, achieving physical fitness and improving one's finances are the most frequently made resolutions, often the guilt-induced responses to holiday indulgence. According to a study published last month in the Journal of Clinical Psychology, only eight percent of people who make New Year's resolutions keep them and achieve success.

"One reason that many people fail to achieve their goals is that they might not be ready to make the change, even if they would benefit from doing so," said Joel Bitman, a Bethesda-based psychotherapist. "Another reason is that people often set unrealistic goals or don't have a plan to achieve their goals."

Actually wanting to make the change that

the resolution would bring about is the first step followed by developing strategies to achieve it. "When you set a goal, say quitting smoking for example, ask yourself whether it's something that you really want to do or something that you think you should do," said Bitman. "If you're doing it because you think you should or because society is telling you that you should, but the reality is that you really enjoy smoking, it will be much harder, if not impossible, to quit."

While it is easy and often tempting to look at pictures of ultra thin models and resolve to transform one's body by the end of the year, setting unrealistic expectations can sabotage a set of goals, says Alicia Brand, a Falls Church personal trainer.

"Trying to lose 60 pounds in time for a beach vacation during spring break isn't going to happen," he said. "But losing 10 pounds by April is absolutely achievable for most people."

A key to that achievement is creating a set of concrete goals that are realistic, specific, measurable and include a timetable, says Bittman. "You actually have to make mindset changes and behavioral changes in order to successfully reach a goal, and changes in behaviors are often quite difficult," he said. "But if you are able to make

SEE RESOLUTIONS, PAGE 9

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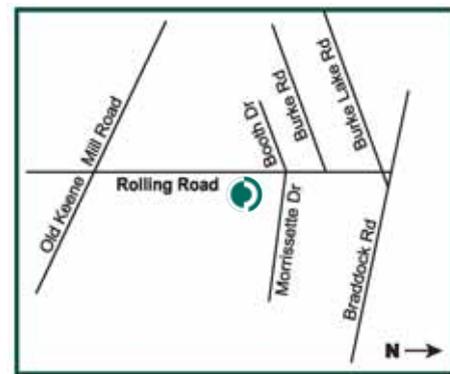
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WELLBEING

Resolutions

FROM PAGE 8

small changes and reach small weekly, daily or even hourly goals, you're more likely to gain confidence to keep going. It's easy to become discouraged and give up."

"If you want to become more fit, but you haven't exercised in years, you might begin by committing to walking 30 minutes a day, three days a week," said Brand. "That is much more realistic than signing up for a gym membership and planning to spend an hour there every day until you've whittled your body down to a size two."

Failing to recognize small accomplishments and rewarding oneself for reaching milestones is one reason that Bittman believes many resolutions made in January fizzle into a pipedream by February. "If you commit to skipping morning coffee at your favorite coffee shop each day for a week, and saving the money that you would have spent, you can celebrate by allowing yourself to have a small latté on Sunday morning."

Avoiding high-risk environments that can sabotage even the best-laid plans is a suggestion that Brand gives to her clients. "It's like if you're an alcoholic



PHOTO BY MARILYN CAMPBELL/THE CONNECTION

Losing weight and getting in shape are two popular resolutions that people make at the beginning of a new year.

you should stay out of bars," she said. "If you're trying to lose weight surround yourself with people who have healthy eating and fitness habits."

FAITH NOTES

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

Fairfax Baptist Temple, at the corner of Fairfax County Parkway and Burke Lake Roads, holds a bible study fellowship at 9 a.m. Sundays followed by a 10 a.m. worship service. Nursery care and children's church also provided. 6401 Missionary Lane, Fairfax Station, 703-323-8100 or www.fbtministries.org.

The Guhyasamaja Buddhist Center, 10875 Main St., Fairfax City provides free classes to both newcomers and advanced practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism. The center emphasizes working with the mind and learning how to understand the workings of the mind, overcoming inner causes of suffering, while cultivating causes of happiness. Under the direction of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, the center is a place of study, contemplation and meditation. Visit <http://www.guhyasamaja.org> for more information.

Lord of Life Lutheran offers services at two locations, in Fairfax at 5114 Twinbrook Road and in Clifton at 13421 Twin Lakes Drive. Services in Fairfax are held on Saturdays at 5:30 p.m. and Sundays at 8:30 and 10 a.m. Services in Clifton are held on Sundays at 8:15 and 10:30 a.m. 703-323-9500 or www.Lordoflifeva.org.

First Baptist Church of Springfield offers Sunday school at 9:15 a.m., followed by both traditional and contemporary worship services at 10:30 a.m. at 7300 Gary St., Springfield. 703-451-1500 or www.fbcspRINGfield.org.

Clifton Presbyterian Church, 12748 Richards Lane, Clifton, offers Sunday worship services at 10 a.m. and Cup of Fellowship at 11 a.m. Nursery care is provided from 9:45-11:15 a.m. Christian education for all ages is at 9:45 a.m. 703-830-3175.

St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church, 6720 Union Mill Road, Clifton, conducts Sunday masses at 7:30 a.m., 8:45 a.m., Latin mass at 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. It also offers a Saturday vigil at 5:30 p.m. and a Thursday Latin mass

at 7 p.m. Additional mass offered Monday-Friday at 6:30 a.m. (except on Federal holidays) and 8:45 a.m. 703-817-1770 or www.st-andrew.org.

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 8304 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield, offers casual worship services on Saturday evenings at 5:30 p.m. featuring contemporary music. More traditional services take place on Sunday mornings at 8:15 and 11 a.m. Sunday School is from 9:45-10:45 a.m. for children and adults. The church also offers discussion groups for adults. 703-451-5855 or www.poplc.org.

RCIA, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, is for people interested in becoming Catholic or learning about the Catholic Church. RCIA classes are held on Tuesdays beginning September 15 and continuing through April. The classes are usually from 7:30 pm until 9:00 pm and they meet in the Guadalupe Room in the Parish Hall, 3700 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. A group will begin meeting every Wednesday starting September. Sessions are in the Old Parish Hall. All are welcome. Contact Carolyn Smith at 703-273-5369 or carolynsmith.stleos@gmail.com.



Backlick Road over CSX Railroad Fairfax County Public Information Meeting

Thursday, January 26, 2017, 6:30 – 8 p.m.
Island Creek Elementary School
7855 Morning View Lane, Alexandria, VA 22315

If the meeting is cancelled due to inclement weather, the alternate date will be **Thursday, February 2, 2017.**

Find out about plans to replace the existing two-lane bridge that carries Backlick Road over CSX Railroad with a bridge that accommodates the addition of a third CSX railroad track. The bridge is located approximately 300 feet east of the intersection of Backlick Road and Fairfax County Parkway (Route 286).

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and 23 CFR 771, a Programmatic Categorical Exclusion was prepared under an agreement between VDOT and the Federal Highway Administration approved on May 1, 2013. In compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 and 36 CFR Part 800, information concerning the potential effects of the proposed bridge replacement on properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places is included with the environmental document.

Stop by between 6:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. to view displays and learn about the project. VDOT staff will be on hand to answer questions.

Review project information on the VDOT website (www.virginiadot.org/projects), at the public meeting, or during business hours at VDOT's Northern Virginia District Office at 4975 Alliance Drive in Fairfax. Please call ahead at 703-259-2304, 800-367-7623 or TTY/TDD 711 to ensure appropriate personnel are available to answer your questions.

Give your written comments at the meeting, submit them by **February 9, 2017** to Shahrad Behboodi, P.E., Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030, or email meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov. Please reference "Backlick Road over CSX Railroad" in the subject line.

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact VDOT's Civil Rights Division at 703-259-1775 or TTY/TDD 711.

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'Murder on the Nile' on Fairfax Stage

New York's Aquila Theatre brings Agatha Christie's murder mystery to GMU Center for the Arts.

BY DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

Known for its risk-taking, re-envisioning of classic theatre, New York's Aquila Theatre is doing things differently with its unique production of Agatha Christie's best-selling murder mystery, "Murder on the Nile."

"We want to give audiences something to talk about," said Peter Meineck, director, "Murder on the Nile" soon cruising into George Mason University Center for the Arts.

Agatha Christie is affectionately known as "The Queen of Crime." She is one of the best-selling authors of all time. Her "Murder on the Nile" (1948) follows a colorful, baffling cast of eccentric characters through plenty of suspense before all is known. The audience will follow the clues; who can be trusted? Who is telling the truth? Who is a suspect?

Aquila has added its own brand of theatrical touches as three actors will perform about two dozen distinct roles. The show has also been transported in time to London and a BBC radio studio in early 1940



PHOTO BY RICHARD TERMINE/COURTESY OF CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Cast of Aquila Theater's production of Agatha Christie's 'Murder on the Nile.'

as WWII was raging. It was then "a time of turmoil and stress" noted Meineck. He also said that "Murder on the Nile" will be per-

formed as a radio-style drama during the London Blitz.

The production's scene is set this way: the

Where and When

Aquila Theatre presents Agatha Christie's "Murder on the Nile" at George Mason University, Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Performance Sunday, Jan. 22, 2017 at 4 p.m. Tickets: \$26, \$37 and \$44. Call 888-945-2468 or visit www.cfa.gmu.edu Note: There will be a pre-performance discussion 45 minutes before the show.

expected actors can't make it to the BBC studio to perform. Nazi bombs are falling over London. Transportation is iffy and people are taking shelter underground. What is to be done? Well the three available actors have to calmly carry-on. They will perform many quick-changes to play the slew of Christie's distinctive character. The characters range from newlyweds, to a spurned lover, protective family members, troubled passengers as well as the ship's assortment of wise-cracking crew.

Each of the characters has their own style of talking, walking and gesturing along with different costumes and even hats. "They will move about the stage bringing the audience the joy of live theater bringing each character to life," said Meineck.

The show's lighting and sound effects will be "very visual and visceral; something live and way more than just being in front of a screen or a video game." Added Meineck. "The cast puts its energy out there into the audience. It will be a great night of entertainment."

Book yourself onto a special Nile cruise at the Center for the Arts. Journey to find whodunnit. Helping to solve a mystery sounds like something completely different from the January cold.

Join Sleuths for the Mystery

'Solitary Confinement' bound for Workhouse Arts Center.

BY DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

As the cold nights of January descend on the area, a rare production of the murder mystery "Solitary Confinement" by Rupert Holmes can perk-up local sleuths. This Rupert Holmes' whodunit will be produced by the Workhouse Arts Center.

Playwright Holmes is a two-time Mystery Writers of America award winner. He received Tony awards as an author, a composer and a lyricist for "The Mystery of Edwin Drood." Some may well remember Holmes for his big pop hit, "Escape (The Pina Colada Song)."

"'Solitary Confinement' is a perfect example of the compelling in-house productions you'll find at the Workhouse Arts Center – exciting, intimate, and unique," said Tim Rizer, Workhouse Board Chairman. "It's also the world premiere of Rupert Holmes' own rewrite of the script, which will be thrilling even for those who may have seen the show previously."

Asked for details about "Solitary Confinement," Joseph Wallen, director Workhouse performing arts, said; "I have to be careful not to reveal too much, as the



Jason Krage, featured in the mystery 'Solitary Confinement' at the Workhouse Arts Center.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WORKHOUSE ARTS CENTER

joy of discovery and surprise are important to the success of this production. In fact, we will ask every audience not to share the secrets that they experience after each performance," Wallen added.

The mystery of "Solitary Confinement" surrounds a ruthless, reclusive billionaire

living in self-imposed solitary confinement in a fortress-like apartment. He never leaves his inner sanctum; no one is allowed in. He communicates only with something like a Skype-esque video system.

But, then, what he thinks is his perfect isolation is disturbed. With that disturbance

Where and When

"Solitary Confinement" at the Workhouse Arts Center, W-3 Theatre, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Performances: Jan. 13-Feb. 12, 2017. Friday & Saturdays at 8 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets: \$20 (students/seniors) - \$30 (general admission). Call 703-584-2900 or visit www.workhousearts.org

comes plenty of twists, turns, thrills and surprises for patrons to witness, then try to figure out.

Northern Virginia actor Jason Krage has the lead role of Richard Jannings, the rich paranoid tycoon in "Solitary Confinement." Krage recently performed at the Workhouse's production of "The Rocky Horror Show."

"I fell in love with the script immediately," said Krage. "The play is unlike other mysteries I know. It is fascinating with many complex characters and unusual situations. With actors and characters with a wide range of ages and many connections to the world of modern technology, I expect 'Solitary Confinement' will appeal to many generations," noted Krage.

"Having Rupert Holmes' 'Solitary Confinement' represented at the Workhouse is terrific. It matches our goal of bringing unique, quality theatrical experiences to our community," said the Workhouse's Wallen.

Board Chair Rizer added, "The Workhouse couldn't be more excited to be producing such a great work."

CALENDAR

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

English Conversation Groups
weekly at George Mason, Burke Centre, and Lorton Libraries Practice and improve your English. Day and start times vary. Visit: <https://va.evanced.info/fairfaxcounty/lib/eventcalendar.asp>

Stories From Strawberry Park 10 - 11 a.m. Tuesdays in Mosaic - Strawberry Park 2910 District Avenue, Fairfax. Enjoy a live interactive performance each week taught by a group of unique storytellers. For ages 10 and under. Held outside in Strawberry Park. In inclement weather and October through April, storytime will be held in Angelika Film Center. Recurring weekly on Tuesday. Visit: <http://www.fxva.com/listing/mosaic-district/2326/>

SATURDAY/JAN. 7

George Mason University Patriots Womens Basketball vs. Fordham Womens Basketball 1:00 p.m. EagleBank Arena 4500 Patriot Circle, Fairfax.

SUNDAY/JAN. 8

Wage Theft Victims Assistance Workshop 2 - 4:30 p.m. Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington 4444 Arlington Blvd, Arlington. Can you imagine putting in a full day – or even a week – of work and not being paid for it? Join Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy's Executive



The Fairfax Choral Society will hold auditions on Monday Jan. 9 at 7 p.m. 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

Director and wage theft expert Kim Bobo for an afternoon workshop about VICPP's work to achieve social justice for all in the Commonwealth, with a special focus on wage theft, an epidemic afflicting low wage workers throughout Northern Virginia. Hear firsthand from victims of wage theft & learn from community partners what you can do to fight it. The event is co-sponsored by the Centreville Immigration Forum, Shirlington Employment & Education Center and

the Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations. Register online here: <https://buildbridges.eventbrite.com>.

MONDAY/JAN. 9

Inova HealthSource Fitness Session noon - 5 p.m. 2700 Prosperity Avenue, Suite 100, Fairfax. Want to stay focused on your New Year's resolution? There will be a 7 Week Fitness Session Starting

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 13

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2/1/2017.....Valentine's Dining & Gifts I
2/1/2017.....Wellbeing - National Children's Dental Health Month
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Police Out To Catch Drunken Drivers

Grant funds new DWI Enforcement Squad.

BY FALLON FORBUSH
THE CONNECTION

A new squad of police officers has started patrolling the county and they have only one mission: to combat impaired driving.

The new Fairfax County Police Department DWI Enforcement Squad began working on Dec. 1 and are averaging several DWI arrests per night.

You'll know who they are by their cruisers, which are specifically marked with "DWI Enforcement Squad," said 2nd Lt. Dana Ferreira, who runs the squad.

The nine officers who were chosen for the squad have a prowess for catching those who drive while drunk. The officers averaged a total of 241 DWI arrests during the past seven years.

The squad will work from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. in four-day rotations throughout the county eight patrol districts. As a team, the squad will be deployed each night to focus on two districts per shift.

"Our crime analysts will pull problem areas for us," Ferreira said.

The department has wanted to create the team of specialized patrollers for several years, but were unable to find the budget to do so until a federal grant was awarded.

THE SQUAD is operating under the Traffic Division of the department's Operations Support Bureau. However, the equipment and salaries have been paid for by a \$984,785 grant from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Expenditures that are not covered by the federal grant are the squad's vehicle maintenance and fuel.

"Every year, we have to reauthorize and reapply for the grant if we decide to continue with this program," says Ferreira.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

You'll know who they are by their cruisers, which are specifically marked with "DWI Enforcement Squad," said 2nd Lt. Dana Ferreira, who runs the squad.

The department has a desire to keep it going, according to Lt. Eli Cory, who is the assistant commander of the FCPD's Traffic Division.

"However we can continue it, we're going to pursue that, whether it's grant or other funds," says Cory.

Without the grant, the squad would be a large financial undertaking.

All the new positions in the new squad were filled by pulling existing officers out of their assigned communities where they patrolled the streets in the department's patrol bureaus or the bike team, according to Ferreira.

But the holes that the new positions left in the street will be filled by new officers, according to Lt. Eli Cory, who is the assistant commander of the FCPD's Traffic Division.

The desire for the squad came from a need in the community, says Cory.

Statistically speaking, DWIs have gone down in the county but the department has seen drug use increase.

Last year, there were 522 crashes caused by impaired driving in the county, according to Officer Megan Hawkins, a spokesperson for the department. There has been less

this year, with 461 as of Dec. 13.

That's a 12 percent decrease.

"Although DWIs are down, we want to address the impaired driving while under the influence of drugs," Cory said.

"Whether it's marijuana, heroin, cocaine or anything that affects your ability to clearly operate a motor vehicle, it's something we need to address in the county," said Cory.

The squad will receive special training so they can handle drug-related incidents. Squad members will receive advanced training in DWI detection, drug recognition, and effective testimony to ensure successful prosecution.

"We chose officers for this assignment that not only are effective at enforcement, but also effective in prosecution and conviction," said Ferreira. "We're not only taking people off the street, but we're going to successfully convict them in court."

To ensure they stay that way, they will be regularly working with the Commonwealth's Attorney General's Office to receive trainings so that they are up-to-date on case law.

The team will be certified as Drug Recognition Experts through the Drug Evaluation

and Classification Program. The training requirements for certification have been established by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

"In Virginia, the number of DRE certified officers is in the single digits," said Ferreira. "Our entire team will eventually receive that certification when training comes out."

The DRE training is designed to help officers determine if an individual is under the influence of drugs other than alcohol, or the combined influence of alcohol and other drugs, or suffering from some injury or illness that produces similar signs to alcohol and drug impairment.

While prosecution is paramount to the squad, voluntary compliance is the best way to combat impaired driving.

"Our ultimate goal is not making arrests, but is actually reducing the number of crashes in the county," said Ferreira. "If we had a year where we didn't make a single DWI arrest and didn't have a single impairment accident, I'd call that a success."

ONE OF THE MOST VISIBLE things the department does to deter drivers from disobeying DWI laws is through sobriety checkpoints.

"If you look at statistics from other states that don't employ DWI checkpoints, you can see that their DWI crash rates and fatality rates are much higher than Virginia and other states that utilize DWI checkpoints," Cory said.

Primarily, the squad will be on the street looking for traffic safety issues, including DWIs, speeding, reckless driving and distracted driving.

"I'd far rather call a family member and tell them that their loved one has been arrested than tell them that they've been injured or killed in an accident," Ferreira said. "If it takes me bringing someone to jail and taking their freedom even only temporarily to get them off of the roads so they don't harm themselves or someone else, it's entirely worth it to me."

Women's Legislative Roundtable Previews Upcoming 2017 Legislative Session

The League of Women Voters of Virginia (LWVVA) sponsored the Pre-Session of the Women's Legislative Roundtable (WLRT) on Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2016, at the State Capitol in Richmond. Presentations were made by 17 representatives of nonprofit organizations and from secretaries of Governor McAuliffe Cabinet. They gave short and informative speeches on their areas of expertise before an audience of about 130 people, including Leaguers and friends. This annual event provides an opportunity for attendees to learn about what other groups will be advocating for and what cabinet members expect will occur during the upcoming General Assembly (GA).

The subjects covered were as diverse as the state budget, women's rights, vot-

ing rights, election laws and voter protection, equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender LGBT Virginians, issues of Latinos, redistricting, transparency, public safety, criminal justice reform, juvenile justice, domestic and sexual violence, mental illness, poverty, decriminalization of marijuana, civil forfeiture, police reform, and conservation of natural resources. The common thread in many of these speeches was the need for justice and fairness.

Ric Brown, the Secretary of Finance, said that a potential \$1.5 billion budget shortfall is being expected due to lower-than-expected income and sales tax collections. To handle this shortfall, Gov. McAuliffe asked Executive Branch agencies to make budget cuts. These have included delaying grant payments and new positions, elimi-

nating 26 current positions, canceling pay raises, trimming the state's payroll in other ways, and using the rainy day fund. Virginia is an income tax state so it is difficult to project income inflows. Medicaid Extension is not in the budget.

Secretary of Administration, Nancy Rodrigues, Secretary of the Commonwealth, Kelly Thomasson, and Secretary of Natural Resources Molly Joseph Ward all thanked the League for its nonpartisan efforts for voter rights. The Commissioner of Elections, Edgardo Cortes said a record number of Virginia voters registered online and voted. According to Co-President Lois Page, "We were awed once again by the compassion, determination and dedication of these civic activists, who want what is best for all Virginians."

What does the WLRT do?

This informational forum is where legislators and non-profit organizations' representatives talk about pending legislation and issues of concern. The LWVVA will moderate the WLRT forums, which start at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesdays, after the GA convenes on Jan. 11, 2017. The first WLRT meeting will be held in Richmond on Jan. 18, 2017. You are welcome to attend these meetings.

The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues.

To learn more about this organization, visit www.lwv-fairfax.org.

NEWS

Lorton Station Team Wins FIRST Lego League Robotics State Tournament

A team of current and former Lorton Station Elementary students won top honors in the FIRST Lego League Robotics state tournament. Team members Bryson Shier, Shreyas Mayya, Jay Rajurkar, Arjun Kumar, and Baylor Shier competed in the two-day event. On the first day of competition, entries were judged in the following categories: Robot Design, Project Solution, and Core Values. The second day of competition included participation in the Robot Game, which involves programming their robot to do more than ten missions in two and a half minutes. The Lorton Station team beat 108 of Virginia and Washington, D.C.'s best teams from the regional tournament to earn the one bid to the world finals in St. Louis.



CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 11

Monday Jan. 9 Registration is open for the next class sessions. Classes offered include Insanity Live, Body Toning, Yoga, Zumba, Pilates, Strength Training, Cardio Kickboxing, Tai Chi, and more. Cost: \$119 inova.org/creg 703-698-2441

Fairfax Choral Society Auditions 7 p.m. Fairfax Presbyterian Church 10723 Main Street, Fairfax. The Fairfax Choral Society Symphonic Chorus is holding auditions. Celebrating its 55th anniversary, the Symphonic Chorus is directed by Dr. Douglas Mears. Weekly rehearsal are held Mondays 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

Setting Writing Goals 7 - 9 p.m. Gunnell House at Truro Church 10520 Main St. Fairfax. Is writing part of your New Year's Resolutions? Author and experienced freelance writer and editor Sarah Hamaker will

give some tips on goal setting and meeting deadlines. Then she'll facilitate a roundtable discussion on overcoming hurdles, setbacks, and discouragement. Come with your goals and your calendar, and leave with a firm plan on how to achieve success in your 2017 writing. This free event is sponsored by Capital Christian Writers. ccwriters@gmail.com 703-803-9447 www.capitalchristianwriters.org

TUESDAY/JAN. 10

Hunter Mill Disaster Recovery Training "Form a Community Resiliency Group" 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. Heritage Fellowship Church, 2501 Fox Mill Road, Reston. In times of disaster, Fairfax County can't recover without community partners and especially the partnership of Fairfax County houses of worship. Hunter Mill District faith communities, nonprofits, homeowner associations, PTA's and other groups are invited to come together on the following two dates to receive important information and training: Seminar - Tuesday, January 10, 2017 - Explore how local groups can form Community Resiliency Groups (CRG's) for their community's recovery after a disaster. The Hunter

Mill District's faith communities will be an integral part of the CRG's, so please appoint several key members to represent your congregation. Exercise - Thursday, February 9, 2017 - The Hunter Mill District community groups and houses of worship will meet again and practice how they will work together in response to a local disaster. This will be a facilitated Tabletop Exercise (TTX). Each will begin with a free dinner at 6:00 p.m., followed by the seminar at 6:30 p.m. Ample time will be given for Q&A and discussion during the evening sessions. Both evenings will end at 8:30 p.m. Please advise us of any ADA accommodations needed or food requirements when you register. Please direct questions to Renice Holman at 703-324-7608. Register online at: <https://huntermillresiliency.eventbrite.com>.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 11

George Mason University Patriots Womens Basketball vs. George Washington Women's Basketball. 11:00 a.m. EagleBank Arena 4500 Patriot Circle, Fairfax.

"Learn About the Consolidated Community Funding Pool" 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. The Jo Ann Rose Gallery Reston Community Center Lake Anne 1609-A Washington Plaza, Reston.

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.

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WEDNESDAY, JAN. 11

"Learn About the Consolidated Community Funding Pool" 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. The Jo Ann Rose Gallery

Reston Community Center Lake Anne 1609-A Washington Plaza, Reston. Our January 2017 FCIA Network Meeting will focus on Consolidated Community Funding Pool (CCFP) priorities in preparation for the next CCFP funding cycle. FCIA Network Meeting attendees will dialogue about the types of services for which there is a continuing need, current service gaps, and emerging needs. The CCFP funds local nonprofit organizations to provide human services, affordable housing development and construction. Priority-setting is the first step of the next funding cycle. Once set, a request for proposal will be issued in the fall of 2017. Awards will be announced the following spring. Total funding in FY 2017 was 12.5 million dollars. Please note, this meeting WILL NOT take place at the Government Center.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Pulling grilled paneer out of a tandoor.

Indian BBQ comes to Mosaic District

Choolaah Indian BBQ has opened a new restaurant in Fairfax. The opening represents Choolaah's expansion in the Mid-Atlantic area and its growth as a destination for Indian cuisine in the American market.

Choolaah Indian BBQ is a fine-casual restaurant serving traditional Indian dishes that appeal to the contemporary palate. Choolaah brings a modern twist to a 5,000-year-old Indian cooking tradition — "tandoori" — delivering an innovative menu in an atmosphere where food is prepared before your eyes.

"Fairfax and the Greater DC area represent an important part of Choolaah's growth strategy, and we're excited about the brand's new presence in the Mid-Atlantic region," said Raji Sankar, Co-CEO of Choolaah. "Our commitment to premier ingredients, authenticity and accessibility has won over the taste buds of our Cleveland restaurant patrons, and we look forward to bringing those same values to Fairfax guests."

Choolaah's founders, Raji Sankar and Randhir Sethi, created the concept with the intent of transforming the Indian cuisine experience in the American market. They saw an opportunity to develop a menu of traditional Indian dishes that would appeal to the American palate, without compromising the authenticity of the cuisine.

After the duo made a name for themselves as owners and operators of multiple restaurants in Northeast Ohio and Pennsylvania, they sought to channel their passion for Indian cuisine and opened the first

Choolaah restaurant in 2014. The brand's flagship location in Cleveland, Ohio, has laid the foundation for continued success in new markets through its enticing menu and vibrant atmosphere.

"Our four tandoor clay ovens — which are the communal centerpiece of our restaurants — lock in flavor as they grill your food at 700° to juicy perfection," said Sethi. "Using tandoor ovens in a fine-casual display setting like this is unique, so we're eager to let our signature cooking method wow Fairfax patrons."

Guests can find a range of delectable Indian dishes, including the classic chicken tikka masala, black lentil daal, lamb meatball wraps, samosa chaat, salads with choice of proteins like grilled salmon, naan breads and kulfi ice cream. The majority of dishes are available gluten free, and Choolaah offers vegetarian and vegan options in every major menu category. For younger eaters, Choolaah offers a naan pizza and other kid-friendly recipes. The restaurant also serves beer and wine by the glass, in addition to its Choolaah Chai, Mango Lassi, iced teas, lemonade and suite of soft drinks. Additionally, Choolaah's turnkey catering offerings for groups of six or more people are a crowd favorite.

Located in the Mosaic District, the restaurant will serve guests from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday and Sunday. On Friday and Saturday, Choolaah will be open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. For more information about Choolaah or its Fairfax location, visit www.Choolaah.com.

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21 Announcements

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M. Steven Ellis, Manager
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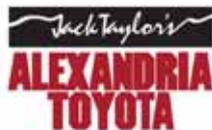
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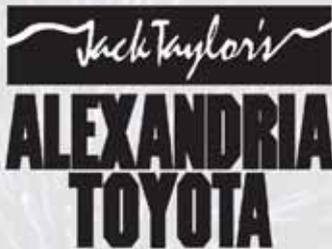
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Fairfax Station • 5 Ac. w/ Pool \$1,175,000

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New Construction - Norris Model
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 - 3 Pools
 - Fitness Center

SOLD



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