

Chantilly CONNECTION

Fair Oaks ♦ Fair Lakes

PET CONNECTION

Inside



Alexis Shiflette, of the Greenbriar community, with boyfriend Charles Kerr after the Mountain View High graduation ceremony.



Looking Toward the Future

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Missing Teen

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Wildcats Take Conference 5 Tournament

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PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION
CALENDAR, PAGE 8 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 10

PHOTO COURTESY OF FCPS

The Rocky Run Middle Science Olympiad team presents its third place trophy, won at regional competition, to Principal Amy Goodloe.

Free Carseat Inspections

Certified technicians from the Sully District Police Station will perform free, child safety carseat inspections Thursday, March 2, from 5-8:30 p.m., at the station, 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. No appointment is necessary. But residents should install the child safety seats themselves so technicians may properly inspect and adjust them, as needed.

Because of time constraints, only the first 35 vehicles arriving on each date will be inspected. That way, inspectors may have enough time to properly instruct the caregiver on the correct use of the child seat. Call 703-814-7000, ext. 5140, to confirm dates and times.

Blood Drive at Fire Academy

The Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, in partnership with INOVA Blood Donor Services, will be hosting a blood drive at the Fire and Rescue Academy on Friday, March 3 from 12 p.m. until 5 p.m. at 4600 West Ox Road, Fairfax.

Call 1-866-256-6372 for more.

Dulles Suburban Center Meetings

As the Dulles Suburban Center Study enters into its second phase, the Advisory Group has set its schedule for the next several months. Residents are invited to attend the meetings and hear what the group is discussing regarding land use in the Dulles Suburban Center. The upcoming meetings will be held at 7 p.m. at the Sully District Governmental Center, 4900 Stonecroft Blvd., Chantilly, on March 6, and March 21.

Specific meeting topics will be posted on the Dulles Suburban Study website <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/dullessuburbancenter/meetings.htm> closer to the date of each meeting.

Several Volunteers Needed at WFCM

Western Fairfax Christian Ministries at 4511 Daly Drive, Suite J, Chantilly, seeks individuals to volunteer for the following:

❖ Volunteer(s) to clean office and bathroom, Tuesday or Thursday, either 8:30-9:30 a.m. or 2:30-4 p.m.

❖ Volunteer(s) to answer phones and schedule appointments, Tuesday and Thursday, 2-4:30 p.m. Requirements: good phone skills, personable, able to conduct pantry tours. Interview and completed application required.

❖ Volunteer(s) for Client Services Intake, Monday and Friday, 9:45 a.m.-1:45 p.m. Requirements: Spanish speaker preferred, ability to work with clients, able to conduct pantry tours. Interview and completed application required.

❖ Volunteer for Food Pantry, bagging clients' food choices, Thursday, 10:45 a.m.-2:15 p.m. Requirements: must be able to stand for long periods of time and lift at least 25 pounds. Interview and completed application required.

See wfcmvva.org/how-you-can-help/volunteer-program/

Volunteer Drivers Are Needed

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

ENTERTAINMENT

Email announcements to chantilly@connectionnewspapers.com. Include date, time, location, description and contact for event: phone, email and/or website. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before event.

ONGOING

Black History Month Events.

Through Feb. 28, 2-4 p.m. at Terminal on the ticketing level at Dulles International Airport, 1 Saarinen Circle. A month-long event series for airport employees and passengers in celebration of Black History Month. Visit www.metwashairports.com for more.

Art Guild of Clifton Exhibit.

10 a.m.-8 p.m. at Clifton Wine Shop, 7145 Main St., Clifton. Includes oil paintings of European settings; doors, windows, and flower shops. Free. Call 703-409-0919 for more.

Carolina Shag Dance.

Wednesdays, 6:30-10 p.m. at Arlington/Fairfax Elks Lodge, 8421 Arlington Blvd., Fairfax. Free lessons at 7:30 p.m.; no partners needed; dinner menu at 6:45 p.m. Tickets are \$8. Visit www.nvshag.org for more.

Open Rehearsal.

Wednesdays, 7:30 p.m. at Lord of Life church, 13421 Twin Lakes Drive, Centreville. The Fairfax Jubil-Aires barbershop chorus invites men of all ages who enjoy singing. Free. Visit www.fairfaxjubilaire.org for more.

Toddlin' Twos.

Tuesdays, 10:30 and 11:30 a.m. at the Chantilly Library, 4000 Stringfellow Road. Early literacy storytime with songs and activities included. Age 2 with caregiver, free. Call 703-502-3883 to reserve a spot.

Storytime for Three to Fives.

Tuesdays, 1:30 p.m. at the Chantilly Library, 4000 Stringfellow Road. Stories and activities for children age 3-5 with caregiver. Free. Call 703-502-3883 to reserve a spot.

English Conversation Group.

Thursdays, 7 p.m. at the Chantilly Library, 4000 Stringfellow Road. Practice English with a group of students and adults. Free. Call 703-502-3883 to reserve a space.

English Conversation Group.

Selected Saturdays, 3 p.m. at the Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germain Drive. Practice English with a group of students and adults. Free. Call 703-830-2223 for a list of dates.

English Conversation Group.

Tuesdays, 10:30 a.m. at the Chantilly Library, 4000 Stringfellow Road. Practice English with a group of students and adults. Free. Call 703-502-3883 to reserve a space.

Plant Clinic.

Saturdays, 10:30 a.m. at the Chantilly Library, 4000 Stringfellow Road. A neighborhood plant clinic with horticultural tips, information, techniques, and advice. Free. Call 703-502-3883 to reserve a space.

ESL Book Club.

Mondays, 7 p.m. at the Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germain Drive. Meet and discuss a book chosen by group. Free. Call 703-830-2223 with questions and to reserve a spot.

ESL Book Club.

Every other Saturday, 11 a.m. at the Chantilly Library, 4000 Stringfellow Road. Adults learning English are welcome to meet and discuss a book chosen by the group. To find out book title, call 703-502-3883.

Lego Block Party.

Every other Tuesday, 3 p.m. at the Chantilly Library, 4000 Stringfellow Road. Legos will be provided for an

afternoon of building. Grades 3-6. Free. Call 703-502-3883 to reserve a spot.

Duplo Storytime.

Every other Wednesday, 10:30 and 11:30 a.m. at the Chantilly Library, 4000 Stringfellow Road. Develop and reinforce early literacy skills for reading success. Ages 1-3 with adult. Free. Call 703-502-3883 to reserve a spot.

Live After Five.

Fridays at 5:30 p.m. at The Winery at Bull Run, 15950 Lee Highway. Every Friday night a band plays on the patio of the winery. Free to attend. Visit www.wineryatbullrun.com for a full schedule.

Mondays are Family Night.

5-7 p.m. at Villagio, 7145 Main St. \$45 for a family of four. Call 703-543-2030.

Legos Kids Club.

Every other Tuesday, 10:30 a.m. at the Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germain Drive. Thousands of Legos for children to play with. Ages 6-12. Free. Call 703-830-2223 to reserve a space.

Starlight Storytime.

Every other Wednesday, 7 p.m. at the Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germain Drive. Stories under the stars for ages 4-8. Wear pajamas and bring stuffed friends. Free. Call 703-830-2223 to reserve a space.

Over-40 Softball League.

A Fairfax-based league is looking for enough players to form another team. Players must be at least 40 years of age to be eligible. All games are doubleheaders -played on Sundays at Bready Park in Herndon between 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. If interested, email skeduman@aol.com for more.

PET ADOPTIONS

Adopt a Cat or Dog. Fridays, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at PetSmart, 12971 Fair

Lakes Center, Fairfax. Visit www.lostdogrescue.org for more.

Adopt a Dog.

Saturdays, 12-3 p.m. at Petco, 13053 Lee Jackson Highway. Visit hart90.org for more.

Adopt a Dog.

Sundays, 1-4 p.m. at Petco, 13053 Lee Jackson Memorial Hwy. Adopt a puppy or dog. Visit aforeverhome.org for more.

Adopt a Dog.

Saturdays, 1-4 p.m. at PetSmart, 12971 Fair Lakes Center, Fairfax. Adopt a puppy or dog. Visit www.lostdogrescue.org for more.

THROUGH FEB. 28

FPA Television Series. Various times on Verizon FiOS TV and Cox Communications in Fairfax County, and by Comcast in Reston. The specials will air on FPA CHANNEL 10, FPA INTERNATIONAL CABLE 30, and FPA SPIRITUAL TV 36. Fairfax Public Access (FPA), will premiere a special series of new movies and documentaries throughout February, in recognition of Black History Month.

THROUGH MARCH 31

Slave Life Exhibit. Various times at the Sully Historic Site, 3650 Historic Sully Way, Chantilly. \$7 adults, \$6 students, and \$5 seniors and children age 5-15. Artifacts excavated from around Sully's 18th-century slave cabins. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/sully-historic-site/ or call 703-437-1794 for more.

BEGINNING FEB. 22

Art at the Library. 7-8:30 p.m. and continuing every fourth Wednesday each month at Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germain Drive. Practice for beginners to expert

artists. February theme: Sketching. Bring sketchbook and drawing materials. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/ce/ or call 703-830-2223 to register.

FRIDAY/FEB. 24

Hot Dogs Over the Campfire. 5:30-7 p.m. at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, 5040 Walney Road. Enjoy a wagon ride through the Rocky Run stream valley and a hot dog dinner cooked over the campfire. Learn who Ellanor C. Lawrence was and hear about the area's local history. Hot dogs, buns, condiments and s'mores for dessert are provided, bring drinks and sides. \$10, and children must be accompanied by an adult registered for the program. Meet at Cabell's Mill. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/eclawrence for more.

SATURDAY/FEB. 25

Planting a Four Season Garden. 10 a.m. at Fair Oaks Garden Center, 12101 Lee Highway. With Peg Bier, Merrifield Plant Specialist. Call 703-560-6222 for more.

Sully District Fundraiser. 7-9 p.m. at Supervisor Kathy Smith's, 4639 Star Flower Drive. 703-814-7100.

SUNDAY/FEB. 26

Rose Products Seminar. 2-4 p.m. at Merrifield Garden Center, 12101 Lee Highway. Learn about benefits of proven products that award-winning rose growers use to save time and money. Free. Visit www.merrifieldgardencenter.com.

MONDAY/FEB. 27

A Night With Mike McCurry. 7-9 p.m. at Centreville United Methodist Church, 6400 Old Centreville Road. Former White House Press Secretary to President Clinton and co-chair for the Commission of Presidential Debates will be discussing the intersection of faith and politics. Visit www.centreville-umc.org or call 703-830-2684 for more.

SATURDAY/MARCH 4

Garden Preparations. 10 a.m. at Fair Oaks Garden Center, 12101 Lee Highway. With Kathy Jentz, Editor of Washington Gardener Magazine shares tips on getting the garden ready for spring. Call 703-560-6222.

Film Screening. 2 p.m. at Unity of Fairfax, 2854 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. The screening of the film "Matt Shepard is a Friend of Mine," a documentary explores the life and tragic death of Matthew Shepard, a gay student murdered in 1998, in Laramie, WY. The story of Matt Shepard's struggles is told through the personal lens of his friends, family and those who were close to him throughout the years. Visit mattshepard.eventbrite.com.

SUNDAY/MARCH 5

Dr. Seuss Readings. 2:30-3:30 p.m. at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, 5040 Walney Road, Chantilly. Join in the annual celebration of the birthday of Dr. Seuss with a reading of "The Lorax," who favored trees. \$8. Call 703-631-0013 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/eclawrence for more.

SATURDAY/MARCH 11

Women of Walney. 2 p.m. at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, 5040 Walney Road, Chantilly. Learn how the women of Walney both lived within and challenged the gender roles of their time periods. \$6. Call 703-631-0013 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/eclawrence for more.

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Matching Pets to Their Owners

Animal shelters' counselors help families find the right fit for a pet. **Recommended Reading**

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Natasha had been abandoned and was wandering the streets of Arlington under the blaze of a hot summer sun when she was rescued and taken to a local shelter. When handlers at the shelter leashed the German Shepherd mix, she became aggressive with other animals. After months of behavior classes, however, she began to trust and her pugnacious disposition became docile. Within months, Natasha was adopted by a family with small children.

"Most people wouldn't think of a German Shepherd as a kid-friendly dog, but that's a great example of how by taking a dog at their face value and looking at their personality rather than their breed, you can end up with a great dog that you wouldn't have thought of before," said Chelsea Lindsey, communications specialist for the Animal Welfare League of Arlington.

Lindsey says that Natasha's adoption dispels a common misconception that certain breeds are better suited than others for families with children. Lindsey and other shelter counselors say that when selecting a family pet, parents should consider factors such as the animal's temperament and the family's ability to afford and care for a dog properly.

"We don't say there are breeds that are better with kids than others.

Some pit bulls are great with kids and some aren't," said Lindsey. "You really have to look at the individual personality of the dog. Are they going to let kids tug on their ear or take away their toys? Just because a dog is a lab or golden retriever doesn't mean that they're going to be good with kids."

Before selecting a pet, families should do an assessment of their ability to give the new pet proper socialization, training, exercise, and attention. "You have to be realistic and honest with yourself," said Lindsey. "Puppies are appealing and hard to turn down, but they're a lot of work. Maybe your family is looking for an adult dog that is already house trained."

One of the first steps to successful pet ownership is beginning with an animal that is the right fit. Counselors are on hand at local shelters to help with the adoptions process. "We want to understand your family's environment and match it up with the best dog," said Gina Lynch, outreach coordinator for the Humane Society of Fairfax County, Inc. "Half the people who walk in to adopt a specific dog end up adopting something else after they talk to a counselor. You might want a puppy, for example, but if you're gone a lot during the day, an older dog that doesn't need as much attention might be a better match."

"When anyone adopts a dog, it's important to work closely with the counselors who know the dog best, so they can tell you about any personality issues," continued Lynch. "If a dog has recently lost its owners, for example, it might be depressed."

Becoming familiar with an animal's history before deciding to adopt is one of the recommendations

Lynch offers. "It's like when you buy a used car, you want to know all you can about the car so that you can be an informed buyer," she said.

One-on-one counseling for families to help with the adjustment of adding a pet to a family is recommended, says Lynch. "We teach families that dogs have to have their own space and an area to eat," she said. "We want to give the best advice to make it a good situation. That's why the whole family has to be there. Until the dog gets used to your household, it's best to give the animal their space."

Often, young children don't have the emotional maturity necessary to control their feelings or the skill set and physical strength needed to care for an animal, says Lynch, so interactions with family pets must be observed closely by a parent to help ensure safety.

"With regard to bringing a pet home, supervision is key in all interactions to make sure that both the child and the animal are safe and comfortable and being handled appropriately," said Joanna Fortin, community outreach and adoptions manager for the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria. "It can take weeks to months to get acclimated, particularly if the pet hasn't lived with a child before. We encourage

parents to be vigilant for a few months. We advise them about the potential issues that could arise so that they can coexist peacefully."

"When the family does bring the animal home, we do encourage people to use caution around

food, toys or other items of high value to the dog," added Fortin. "Proactively setting boundaries with the child, like [not] touching [the dog] when he's eating or taking toys out of his mouth. Respecting those boundaries can generally set them up for success."

Parents must watch vigilantly for the signs that a new family pet is uncomfortable or fearful, says Fortin. "Those signs include growling, avoidance, like the animal choosing to keep its distance, or things that they're visually communicating like looking fearful. Most of the time the dog will give lots and lots of warning before it bites," she said. "Children should use proper behavior and not be too loud or too rough with the animal. There is a potential for an injury to occur, but that is not the norm."

"Kids often want to watch the dog eat, which is fine as long as they stay at an appropriate distance and respect the dog's boundaries," continued Lynch. "Just like you don't want a dog eating off your plate at the table, a dog doesn't want you trying to pull his food away from him."

There is a return on the significant investment that goes into animal adoption with benefits ranging from self-confidence to communications skills development. "Pet ownership teaches kids about responsibility if they are actively taking part in [caring for] the animal," said Lindsey. "It teaches them compassion. They learn to listen and pay attention to non-verbal cues because they don't speak the same language as the animal. Kids who grow up with animals in their homes are also more aware of animal welfare issues."

For those considering adopting a pet, see www.livingwithkidsanddogs.com/.

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Panel to investigate internet loans, car-title loans and open-end lines of credit.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

The growing chorus of criticism about predatory lending in Virginia may not have prompted lawmakers to start passing laws to crack down on the industry. But it has accomplished one thing, formation of a work group.

"In this town, if you are in the minority party in a chamber that's two-thirds Republican, you take victories where you can," said Del. Mark Keam (D-35). "I'd like to think something good can come out of this if we can bring stakeholders together."

Lawmakers are concerned about several aspects of high-interest loans. One is the bait-and-switch nature of many of the businesses, where customers walk into a car-title business but walk out with an open-end line of credit instead. Another issue is the completely unregulated nature of open-end lines of credit, originally created for department stores but now used by car-title lenders and internet lenders. Regulators don't track them, and lenders don't need a license to offer them. Recent years have seen online lenders from around the world offer them with interest rates of up to 5,000 percent.

"If the work group doesn't deal with the open-end loans, it'll be a waste of time," said Jay Speer, executive director of the Vir-

ginia Poverty Law Center. "You can make rules about the Consumer Finance Act, and then all the internet lenders will just switch to open-end loans and it'll all just be a waste of time."

WORKING GROUPS are a common way for lawmakers to punt, essentially putting off making decisions and outsourcing solutions to a panel that makes recommendations. Sometimes the groups end up making recommendations that are adopted by the General Assembly. Recent years have seen successful working groups that made significant changes to energy policy and worker's compensation. Many lawmakers view them as an ideal way to consider difficult issues outside of the frenzied pace of the General Assembly sessions.

"There are what I believe to be plus sides to being a part-time legislature, and there are downsides to being a part-time legislature. One of the downsides is you can't keep working during one session in a short session," said Del. Peter Farrell (R-56). "Sometimes it takes a year."

For critics of predatory lending, the chief goal of the working group will be to regulate open-end lines of credit. These have become the tool of choice for car-title lenders and internet lenders to offer unlimited amounts of interest. And lawmakers don't know the scale of the problem because state

regulators don't track them. That's a problem that critics say has an easy fix — require a license to offer open-end lines of credit, and make them abide by the same rules as car-title lenders or payday lenders.

"I hope that we see a path forward for all lenders to be licensed," said Dana Wiggins, who answers the Predatory Lending Hotline at the Virginia Poverty Law Center. "If they're operating in the state of Virginia, they should all be licensed and they should all have to follow the same rules."

THE SHADOWY WORLD of internet lending is also in the crosshairs of the work group. Some companies offer loans at interest rates from 600 percent to 5,000 percent. Some of these companies try to get around laws designed to protect consumers by claiming to have affiliations with Indian tribes, allowing them to take advantage of uncertainty surrounding a law from 1918 — long before the World Wide Web revolutionized modern American finance. Last month, Attorney General Mark Herring helped secure a \$15 million settlement against a California-based company that was using a fraudulent relationship to a North Dakota tribe to evade Virginia lending laws.

"In the absence of action, the internet becomes a lawless place that plays by different rules than traditional commerce," said Kevin Mauer, associate director of the Virginia Catholic Conference. "Without protective regulation, the commonwealth's vulnerable consumers may fall prey to more and more opportunistic lenders."

IN SESSION

No More Psych Beds

Robert Johnson of Woodbridge understands the mental health crisis from a personal perspective. Back in 2011, he was struggling with a serious bout of depression and ended up handcuffed to an emergency room bed for nine hours. That's because no psychiatric beds were available in Prince William County. So he had to wait for one to be available in Fairfax.

"Think of a horse-drawn carriage, and the nearest hospital is 20 miles away and you're riding over speed bumps. That's what I'm going through emotionally. That's the kind of pain that I'm feeling handcuffed to that bed."

Johnson presented his story to lawmakers last week and asked them to support a bill introduced by Republican Del. **Peter Farrell** (R-56). But lobbyists for hospitals opposed the bill because they don't want lawmakers to change laws requiring hospitals to have certificates of public need, known as COPN. Farrell says he's frustrated people in need won't get help because

hospitals are concerned about their bottom line.

"I don't think it has anything to do with psych beds. I don't think they want anything at all having to do with COPN reform period," said Farrell. "I don't think they want anything to go anywhere because they don't want things to change. They enjoy having their cake and eating it too."

One silver lining, Farrell says, is that the issue will go to the Deeds Commission, which was set up after Democratic Sen. Creigh Deeds (D-25) was attacked by his son because a psychiatric bed was not available.

Ethics Reform or New Loopholes?

Should lawmakers be allowed to receive unlimited steak dinners from lobbyists at Ruth's Chris Steakhouse if they are at a meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures? What about a three-martini lunch paid for by coal executives at a meeting of the American Legislative Exchange Council? All of that would be legal under ethics reform adopted by lawmakers this year.

"The bill says that any meal provided for attendance at such a meeting is not reportable," said state Sen. **Adam Ebbin** (D-30), the only senator to vote against the ethics package. "I don't see why we need more loopholes."

Some say that lawmakers are standing up for ethics reform, literally. One provision in the ethics package would allow lawmakers to receive unlimited and unrepeatable food — if it's eaten standing up. That's a provision pushed by Del. **Todd Gilbert** (R-15), who recounted a personal experience to justify the legislation. A few years ago, he said, he went to a lavish reception where he ate some finger food and drank some soda. Several months later, he got notification that the event was valued at several hundred dollars.

"This just is trying to clean up that whole process so that people don't get caught in unwary traps while they are standing around eating finger good and having a glass of cola or something."

The bill also allows the state to redact the home addresses of General Assembly members.

— MICHAEL LEE POPE

A Date With Destiny



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I suppose, given that Feb. 27, 2017 is the eight-year anniversary of my original non-small cell lung cancer, stage IV diagnosis, followed up almost immediately with my "13 month to two-year" prognosis, I should make mention of it. Not that I need any reminding, but perhaps you regular readers who don't exactly know my history, might be curious as to how long I've been droning on about cancer. Strictly speaking, it was June 2009 when my first cancer-type (it was the diagnostic process, actually) column was published: "Dying to Find Out, Sort Of." And I've been self-indulging myself ever since save for the odd occasion when my mind wanders elsewhere and I'm able to write outside the cancer bubble.

Which is probably a good thing, as is venting every week about the good, bad and the ugly, concerning my having cancer and learning how to live with it. Not that the content is particularly informative, factually, but it is an honest description of the anxieties and fears a patient experiences. Occasionally, I will include a few facts, but as a sports- and chocolate-person, medicine/science and my knowledge and understanding, and ability to explain them are mutually exclusive at best and an oxymoron at worst, with yours truly being the moron. What kind of moron you ask? As *Curly Howard of The Three Stooges* answered in a long-ago "two-reeler." "Why? Are there more than one kind?"

Nonetheless, in spite of myself, life has gone on as I'm proud and extremely fortunate to say. As to where I am in the cancer-survivor scheme of things? Somewhere between slim and none. When I was first diagnosed, my oncologist said the survival rate for similarly staged patients (stage IV) after five years was in the low single digits (as in 1 to 2 percent). When my wife, Dina, asked him why aren't there any parades for lung cancer survivors (as is so often the case with breast cancer survivors), he answered quite succinctly: "Because there aren't any," (survivors, that is). I appreciated his honesty and told him so. I was clueless however, as to what my immediate future would really be like. I would know soon enough as it was recommended that I start chemotherapy as soon as possible. I remember my brother, Richard, asking the oncologist what would he do if it was his brother diagnosed with lung cancer; his answer was to begin infusions without delay and so a week later, we began.

And so here I am, nearly eight years later, still minding my own business and sharing it with you all every week. My infusions now occur every five weeks, CT Scans every three months. My face-to-face appointments with my oncologist occur quarterly as well, a week or so after the scan to discuss the results. So far, mostly so good. Oh sure, I've had my moments (tumor growth, fluid build-up in both lungs followed by a week-long stay in the hospital, ongoing kidney concerns, no surgery though), but for the most part, I've been incredibly lucky (my oncologist calls me his "third miracle").

As to what I'm doing to help myself and hurt the cancer? Not nothing. In addition to the standard fare offered by my oncologist, I have supplemented my treatment with a variety of non-Western alternatives, many of which I've mentioned in previous columns. Are they working? They're not hurting, I can tell you that. Could I do more? Probably. Should I do more? Absolutely! Am I doing more or less than I used to? Less, I'm afraid. But as Popeye the Sailor Man said so often: "I 'yam what I 'yam." And come Monday, Feb. 27, 2017, I'll have "yamed" myself into an eight-year lung cancer survivor. Do I hear nine? Hopefully, I hear a lot more than that. From my pen to God's ears.

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

SPORTS



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First in State for 200 Free Relay

Centreville Girls Relay team of Gabby Kuehhas, Emily Drakopoulos, Thalia Costanza and Lexi Cuomo came home victorious from the Virginia High School League State Finals, which was held at George Mason University on Friday, Feb. 17. The girls took first in the 200 Free Relay and 3rd in the 200 Medley Relay. Also swimming the finals were Noah Desman (9th - 200 Free), Lexi Cuomo (2nd - 100 Fly, 7th - 100 Back), and Emily Drakopoulos (9th - 50 Free).



PHOTOS BY WILL PALENSCAR

The Centreville Wildcats are the 2016-17 Conference 5 Concorde District Champions.

Wildcats Defeat Chargers

Taking Conference 5 championship.

BY WILL PALENSCAR

The boys' varsity basketball teams at Chantilly and Centreville, schools only separated by 4.5 miles, met for the 2016-17 Conference 5 final on Feb. 17 hosted by Chantilly High School.

Centreville (16-7) earned the #1 seed and in the first their first conference tournament game defeated Robinson 51-48, while Chantilly (15-7) the #2 seed got by Herndon 48-46.

The first quarter would have the Chargers take an early 16-10 advantage after playing the first 8 minutes.

In the second quarter the Chargers would continue their good start outscoring the Wildcats 16-11, giving them a 32-21 half-time advantage.

In the third quarter Centreville would inch closer, holding the Chargers to just 9 points while scoring 13, and closing the deficit to 41-34.

The fourth quarter would belong to the



Marcus Mack #1 shoots a free throw during Centreville's win over Chantilly in the conference championship game.

Wildcats. Chantilly would be held to 10 points, but more importantly the Wildcats would explode for 28 points in the quarter to earn the Conference 5 Tournament Champions with a 62-51 win.



Christian Parana #3 dribbles the ball past a Centreville defender.



Daniel Carmichael #5 handles the ball inside the paint while Nate Goldammer #10 defends.



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At State Swim Meet

Westfield High School Bulldog Swimming Team participated in the Feb. 17 State Swim meet at George Mason University. They are, bottom row, Alan Zhai, Leo Wang, Ben Neubauer, Geoffrey Eisenhart, and Max Kuranda, and, top row, Katie Sanfield, Maddi Vlattas, Sarah Boyle, Syndey Loper, Didi Pace, Allison Hickey, and Olivia Masterson.