



Springfield CONNECTION

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On her birthday,
Gabriela
Alexander
wanted a few
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PET CONNECTION



April 2017: Gabriela and Bear before a 5-mile race, to raise money for the Virginia German Shepherd Rescue.

Life-Changing Pet

My name is Gabriela Alexander. I was reading the Springfield Connection and I saw an ad, which talked about the Pet Connection Special Edition. So, I'm submitting some pictures of my beautiful Husky/Australian Shepherd Mix, Bear and myself.

Bear came to live with me as a foster pet in 2015. He came into my life when I was

going through a very difficult time. Although I have three little Chihuahuas, whom I adore and are my life, Bear provided a different type of comfort. I was going through a loss and I was very depressed. My little Chihuahuas can't run. I love running. Bear does too! So, he and I, started going out for runs and hiking. Some months after I started fostering him, I legally adopted him. Bear and I have participated

since 2015 in several 5Ks or 5-mile races, to raise money for homeless animals. It is extremely rewarding to be able to stay fit while running for a good cause. Bear helped me to get out of that depressing state. He gave my life a different meaning and I couldn't ask for a better running partner. My little Chihuahuas and Bear, are definitely the best companions I could ever ask for.

As you can see, Bear and I love running,

especially, if it is for a good cause. I never participated in those kinds of running events before Bear came to live with me. He provided the comfort I needed and gave my life a new purpose. While I may not be able to provide a loving home for every homeless animal in the world, I want to at least do something for them.

— GABRIELA ALEXANDER,
WOODBRIDGE



Gabriela Alexander and her Bear: The picture taken in May 2017, before a 5K run to raise money for the Animal Welfare League of Arlington.



Early April 2017: A 5K run to raise money for the Friends of the Fairfax Animal Shelter.

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Gabriela and Bear in May 2016, before a 5K run, also for the Animal Welfare League of Arlington.



June 26th, 2017: On her birthday, Gabriela Alexander wanted a few pictures with her beloved pup.

SPRINGFIELD CONNECTION ♦ JULY 27 - AUGUST 2, 2017 ♦ 3

County Pursuing Environmental Goals

Bulova hosts County Environmental Showcase.

BY ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

Part exhibition, part symposium, and part networking opportunity — there was something for everyone even vaguely interested in environmental issues at the Environmental Showcase, hosted by Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova on Saturday, July 22 at the county's Government Center.

The Fairfax County Environmental Vision was first adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2004, when U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11) was the board's chair. Working with then-Supervisor Bulova and others like Supervisor Penny Gross (Mason District), an environmental advisory committee was established to help develop and direct the region's environmental agenda.

The board recently updated the Vision document, so the event provided the community with some insight into the revisions. It also acknowledged the achievements of local government departments and non-profit organizations and civic groups, while recommitting to the task of protecting the local environment and developing models of sustainability as the county continues to grow.

There were kudos enough to go around.

Bulova noted Fairfax County reduced its per capita emissions by 10 percent from 2005 to 2012 and reduced greenhouse gas emissions from public buildings by 21 percent from 2006 to 2015 — at the same time that county properties have grown in square footage.

More than 60 percent of the county's Fairfax Connector buses are "mini-hybrids" which utilize engine cooling systems to reduce emissions and save on fuel bills.

BOTH BULOVA AND CONNOLLY noted the county's goal to increase tree cover in Fairfax County by 45 percent by 2037 has already been met — and exceeded. In addition, according to the Park Authority, said Connolly, the goal of preserving 10 percent of all land in the county is well within reach. "9.26 percent there," said Connolly. "Only 1,864 acres more to go."

Connolly also praised the board for "once again taking a leadership role" and adopting a resolution to sign on to the National Climate Action Agenda to uphold the standards agreed upon by 195 nations at the Paris Climate Summit. "President Trump has withdrawn us from the agreement," said Connolly. "Congratulations. We've joined the ranks of Nicaragua and Syria, the only two other countries who refused to sign ... and Nicaragua only declined because they thought it didn't go far enough."

Much of Connolly's remarks centered on the redevelopment of Tysons Corner.



Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova was the host of the Environmental Showcase at the Government Center: "We've come along way since the adoption of the first Environmental Vision, but there's always work to be done."

"Consider the revolutionary provisions developed by the citizens Tysons Task Force. America's Next Great City is being built in a transit-oriented manner ... ensuring for the first time in Fairfax County that transit, biking and walking will be the safest, most convenient modes of transportation."

Connolly listed a number of additional achievements that had been made, and pointed out that all had been accomplished in partnership with the business community. He also paid tribute to the "unsung heroes in much of our environmental progress," referring to the hundreds of individuals and civic groups who have not only advocated in support of environmental protection, but also put in the hours and added their expertise for the good of the whole community, today and for the future.

A diverse panel of government employees and business leaders made presentations highlighting the partnership that Connolly spoke of. Kambiz Agazi, who Bulova introduced as the "Environmental Orchestra Conductor," is the county's environmental coordinator. Agazi mentioned some of the changes in "Vision 2.0" and also informed the audience that a new "environmental inventory" measuring environmental impact and improvements would be soon forthcoming.

Also present from Fairfax County government were James Hart, planning commissioner, and Susan Hafeli, senior utility analyst.

Tom Fleury, executive vice president of Bowman Consulting; Dr. Dann Sklarew, Ph.D. from George Mason University; and Steve Smith, principal with Cooper Carry architects, all spoke of innovations within their various disciplines that were aimed at marrying profitability with efficiency and environmental stewardship.



U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11) was a guest speaker at the event. Connolly was the board chair when the first Environmental Vision for Fairfax County was developed and adopted.

Kaspowicz of Vienna ("just over the Reston line") who was impressed by the quantity of information being gathered and the work planned to restore and protect those resources.

Patrick Keenan, hotel operations project manager with Maryland-based B. F. Saul Company, Hospitality Group, stopped by to visit with Raea Jean Leinster, self-described "Chief Yuck Officer," of Yuck Old Paint recycling company. B. F. Saul is a client of Yuck. "Everybody can do their part," said Keenan.

THE YOUNGER GENERATION made its presence felt at the Showcase, as well. Members of ESLI — Eco-Schools Leadership Initiative — were also on hand. Sophia Applegate, a rising senior at Oakton High School, joined Madison High School rising junior Kathryn Hammond and VCU fresh-



PHOTOS BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION

The panel at the Showcase symposium and Q&A. From left: James Hart, Fairfax County Planning Commissioner; Tom Fleury, executive vice president, Bowman Consulting; Steve Smith, principal, Cooper Carry; Susan Hafeli, Fairfax County Senior Utility Analyst; and Dr. Dann Sklarew, George Mason University professor and Sustainability Initiatives coordinator. Kambiz Agazi, Fairfax County Environmental Coordinator, also joined in.

Smith had the assembly particularly interested in the description of his company's pilot project, re-designing a test floor in a hotel to align with "wellness building concepts." "In these rooms, even the shower is thinking about your health" with a Vitamin C infused water flow, he said. Before and after the speakers' presentations and questions for the panel, an estimated crowd of about 200 visited booths set up in the conference center lobby and in the main forum.

In the week ahead Reston Association will be reviewing its first major "RASER" — Reston Association State of the Environment Report. The work for the 190-page document was conducted over the last year by Doug Britt and a nine-person volunteer army who donated more than 1,000 hours to the task of unbundling information from a variety of sources and physically viewing, monitoring, testing and observing the natural environment in the area. The Reston booth drew quite a crowd, including Joan

man Archana Nakkara of Vienna to talk about the program that helps other youths learn about environmental issues and start their own environmental initiatives. The three met at an ESLI Conference, and their mutual interest in environmental protection has brought them together to help spread the word. "We love to do the programs especially in the middle schools and even younger. It's great to get kids started early, knowing how important it is to protect the Earth we live on and the community we live in," said Applegate.

There was no disagreement among those gathered. The work needed to be done on environmental issues and on combining the goals of growth and sustainability will probably never be done. "Things keep changing. People, technologies, the world around us, and we need to keep looking ahead to be ready," said Bulova.

The Fairfax County Environmental Vision can be reviewed at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/living/environment/sustainability/.

NEWS

Dominion Awards Grant to Children's Science Center

The Children's Science Center, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to instill a love of learning STEM in all children by providing them opportunities to explore, create and be inspired, recently received a \$10,000 grant from the Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation. Funds will be allocated to support several environmental education programs that Center is coordinating over the coming months. Each year, 50,000 visitors explore the Children's Science Center Lab located at Fair Oaks Mall in Fairfax County.

"The Lab recently celebrated its second birthday and will welcome its 100,000th visitor this year," said Nene Spivy, executive director of the Children's Science Center. "This generous financial support from companies like Dominion Energy promotes educational enrichment and STEM learning for children of all ages in Northern Virginia, and we appreciate Dominion's commitment to inspiring the next generation of innovators," Spivy added.

"When reviewing their grant application, we were very impressed by the scope and the creativity of the Center's educational outreach," said Deborah T. Johnson, regional policy director for State and Local Affairs at Dominion Energy. "It's a pleasure to lend our support to initiatives that connect children with the environment in a memorable and meaningful way."

The Children's Science Center kicked off summer teaming up with "The Great Sunflower Project," a national research effort that encourages children to count and report the pollinators in their own backyards. "We are thrilled for our children to have a chance to be part of a national research effort and are very grateful to Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation for this grant to encourage environmental stewardship," said Spivy.

Other Center initiatives supported by this grant include two sessions of "Dream It, Build It: Nature Center" a week-long summer camp where partici-



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Adalene "Nene" Spivy (left), Executive Director of the Children's Science Center, accepts a \$10,000 check from the Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation presented by Deborah Johnson, Regional Policy Director for State & Local Affairs.

pants will create a nature center and learn about green architectural design, plus a rotating series of activities and experiments on topics such as ocean chemistry and many more. Visit www.childsci.org.

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.

Sydenstricker United Methodist Church has Worship services Saturday in the chapel at 5:30 p.m. and Sunday in the Sanctuary at 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. traditional worship. Sunday School for youth and children is in the Sanctuary at 9:30 a.m., and Sunday School for adults is in the sanctuary at 9:45 a.m. Fellowship is in Hottle Hall on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. 8508 Hooes Road in Springfield. www.sumcdisciples.org or 703-451-8223.

St. Anthony of Padua American National Catholic Church, 10383 Democracy Lane, Fairfax, holds mass for Contemporary Catholics every Sunday at 12:30 p.m. St. Anthony's is an inde-

pendent Catholic parish, inclusive and accepting of all people. Experience true acceptance and true Catholicism. www.MySaintAnthonys.org.

Calvary Hill Baptist Church, 9301 Little River Turnpike in Fairfax, conducts Worship team practice for the Praise Band in the Sanctuary every Thursday at 7 p.m. All are welcome. 703-323-1347.

Jubilee Christian Center will have a Patriotic Service on Sunday, May 28, 8:45 and 11 a.m., featuring special music and message. Jubilee is located at 4650 Shirley Gate Rd., Fairfax. There

will be no 6 p.m. service on May 28. For information, call 703-383-1170, or see www.jccag.org

The Fairfax Church of Christ, 3901 Rugby Road in Fairfax, has facilitators available to help those who are experiencing a separation or divorce. 703-631-2100 or www.fxcc.org.

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Road in Oakton, offers services during the summer on Sundays at 10 a.m. The regular schedule, Sundays at 9:15 and 11:15 a.m., resumes Sept. 11. www.uucf.org.

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OPINION

Help End Domestic Violence

There were 1,483 calls to the domestic violence hotline in 2016, averaging 124 calls per month.

BY JOHN C. COOK
DISTRICT SUPERVISOR (BRADDOCK-R)

Strong families are held together by love, support, and commitment. They are the very foundation of a strong society. If the core of the family is replaced by violence, then all of society is weakened.

Domestic violence affects one in four Fairfax families and causes nearly 1,600 arrests in Fairfax every year. It is almost guaranteed that anyone reading this knows a victim of domestic violence, even if they are unaware of it. These statistics alone paint a dire picture. However, there is a way you can make a positive difference.

GUEST EDITORIAL

Fairfax County's Domestic Violence Prevention Council, which I chair, rolled out the "Make the Call" campaign earlier this year. Its purpose is to encourage victims and witnesses of domestic violence to call Fairfax County's 24-hour domestic and sexual violence hotline at 703-360-7273. This number is completely safe and confidential. The hotline is staffed by experts always ready to offer information, counsel, and resources to victims and concerned citizens. Callers can receive vital information on where



to find shelter, legal resources, financial aid, and even a safe haven for their animals. Anyone can call to learn about the signs of domestic violence and even confirm possible incidents.

The hotline is proving to be highly effective and even lifesaving. The Fairfax County Office for Women received 1,483 hotline calls with an average of 124 calls per month in 2016. At least 98 percent of those who called for services said the hotline better prepared them to make a safety plan. This call can mean the difference between life and death for those escaping abuse.

Domestic violence is sometimes difficult to identify for bystanders, as well as victims. Abusers will often convince their victims that

they deserve the abuse, which shames victims into hiding the problem instead of speaking out. Many abusers threaten their victims with harsher, deadlier punishments if they look for help. These and other factors make domestic violence more difficult to recognize without the help of a seasoned professional. This is why we need more people to make the call when they have that gut feeling that something is amiss.

For bystanders, it could be a black eye, a passing reference, or even a loud argument overheard next door. You do not have to be sure. If you think domestic violence maybe happening, make the call and let professionals help.

For victims, the hotline is available whenever you need it. If you feel threatened, alone, or unsafe in your own home, please make the call. You do not have to go through this difficult time alone. The staff at the hotline is here for you at any hour of the day and will do everything they can to help secure you and your family's safety.

Again, the number is 703-360-7273. Please, make the call, it could save a life.

Victims and witnesses of domestic violence can call Fairfax County's 24-hour domestic and sexual violence hotline at 703-360-7273.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'Catastrophic Events' Can Happen to Anyone

To the Editor:

I am a senior citizen and I have read about the situation with health care or lack of in this country. Your article mentioned many factors that the general public is ignorant of. I personally believe that a country's strength and greatness is reflected in how they treat the least of their people.

We have failed on an epic level as a people. No person wants to be on welfare, Medicaid, public assistance or food stamps. The prevailing ignorant opinion by the vastly uninformed public is that it is an easy ride and that the individuals on welfare want to live off the state.

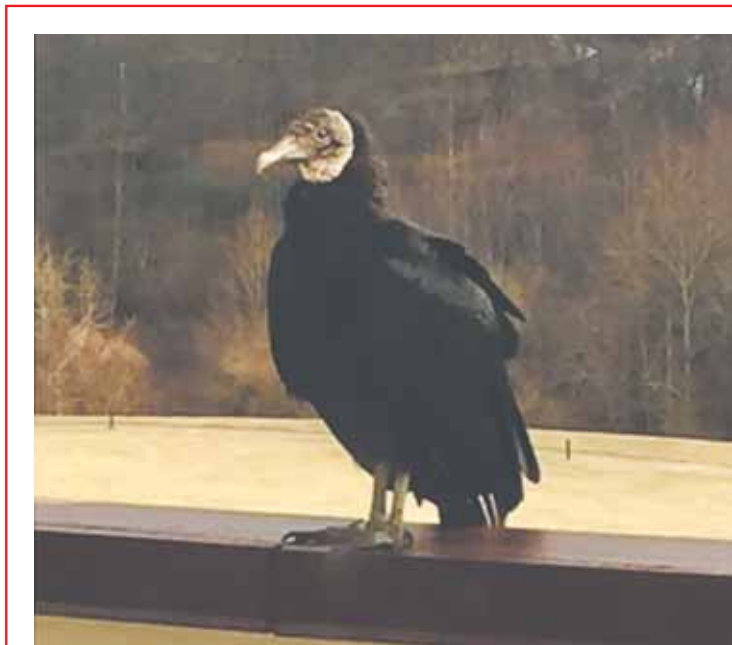
The truth of the matter is that "catastrophic events" can happen to anyone and it only takes the loss of employment and devastating medical bills to suddenly be forced to be on state assistance. It is a true nightmare. It is a degrading humiliating process and I honestly cannot think of anyone who truly wanted to be on Medicaid or welfare. It puts a person in a negative life-altering position where the

judgment by people is harsh and unsympathetic. People make assumptions that those on assistance are no good lazy bums getting a "free ride."

The truth is that President Johnson and his "great society" brought about the demise of social security. He opened the doors to the looting of the program for non-related financial projects.

I am an independent voter. I am a senior. I used to be an employee of United Airlines. I lost all my benefits and do not have any retirement. I also was a part time teacher. I have no teacher's pension. I have no savings and no retirement to fall back on and am living on S.S.I. of \$735 a month and that is my sole income. It is impossible to live on this. I have no money by the middle of the month.

I injured myself in a freak accident at Dulles airport. I lost my job. it was a devastating loss for me. I could not find any work. I was forced out of desperation to apply for Medicaid. I do not like Medicaid because the types of cli-



"Victor the Vulture is our new office pet. While he's not very cuddly, we enjoy his visits to our office balcony, which he uses to 'scope' out the area. From time to time we get to watch him dive bomb from the fifth floor of the Government Center. Although we are unsure of his success rate. Victor is bigger than most cats and I wouldn't want him near mine!"

— BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CHAIRMAN SHARON BULOVA

ents I have to associate with and choice of doctors is very limited. Having grown up in a family where my mother was a Democrat and my father a Republican I have

had two viewpoints. My maternal grandfather was with the Burlington Northern Railroad 30-

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COMMENTARY

Voluntary System Is a Failure

By SCOTT SUROVELL
STATE SENATOR (D-36)

In 2016, the General Assembly enacted legislation requiring the Virginia State Police to staff gun shows and be available to conduct voluntary background checks upon request by private, non-federally licensed gun sellers as part of a broader compromise on concealed weapon permits. The law has been a total failure.

The legislation required the state to spend \$300,000 to hire three new Virginia State Police employees to be present at all gun shows. What have we got for our \$300,000?

In January, The Daily Press reported that as of Jan. 1, 2017, one person was denied a purchase at 41 gun shows after 39 checks.

This week, the Richmond Times Dispatch reported that since that time, only 18 more checks were performed in the next six months ending June 30, 2017. In other words, in 77 gun shows there were 59 voluntary background checks. At 45 of 77 shows, no checks at all were requested. As of today, one buyer was denied.

During the same period of time, Virginia conducted 39,738 background checks by federally licensed gun dealers at gun shows that resulted in 325 denials.

The Richmond Times Dispatch obtained an estimate that 15 to 20 private sales occur at each of these gun shows. The Richmond Times Dispatch went on to note that if you assume the same rejection rate for private sales as in sales by federally licensed buyers, you would have expected to see 9 to 13 additional rejections.

However, this fails to account for the fact that people who know they cannot legally purchase a gun from a federally licensed dealer are much more likely to opt for the private sale because they know there is no check. The reality is that private sales probably have much higher potential rejection rates.

Someone ought to be asking why did the rate of voluntary background checks drop by from 39 in the first six months to 18 in the next six. Second, we ought to be asking ourselves whether it is a prudent investment of taxpayer resources to spend \$5,084 per background check or \$300,000 to stop one sale per year?

The bottom line is that if you cannot legally purchase a gun in Virginia it is still easy to get one — go to a private seller.

This is why we need to pass the legislation that I proposed last year (SB1439) requiring a check on every gun transfer in Virginia excluding family members, guns bequeathed at death, transfers required to prevent great bodily harm, or temporary transfers in the presence of the owner. Polls repeatedly show that Virginians — including gun owners — support universal background checks by over 85 percent.

No one wants to prevent a law-abiding mentally stable Virginian from purchasing a firearm, and we have had 12 months to see if the voluntary background check experiment would work. It does not and it is now clear more than ever that mandatory background checks are the best solution to keeping guns out of the hands of criminals and the mentally ill.

It is an honor to serve as your state senator. You can reach me at scott@scottsuovell.org if you have any feedback.



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PET CONNECTION

Holding Lucky

"Lucky belongs to my son, Heath Marquardt. We adopted Lucky and he is 2 years old. Lucky lets everyone hold him. I'm Heath's dad, Fred, in this picture," writes Fred Marquardt of Springfield.



Dog Kisses

A snuggle moment between Audrey Herod of Springfield and her dog Magic. Audrey received a letter from Santa saying that her Christmas gift was to pick out a canine friend from a shelter. She then went looking for the perfect pal and found Magic at Arlington's animal shelter. It was love at first site for both of them!



Sleeping His Days Away

Fred Marquardt of Springfield submitted this photo of 14-year-old Leo. "Leo was adopted for my son, Stefan James Marquardt. Leo is friendly and sleeps his day away. Leo doesn't have much energy."

Meet Lucy!

Lucy lives with the Herod family in Springfield and she is 'extra special.' She is a 'Hemingway Cat' or also known as a 'Polydactyl' because she has extra toes on all of her paws! Her paws look like mittens.



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Hannah Johnson, 16, of Fairfax Station, with her Great Pyrenees named Thor.



PET CONNECTION



Special Connection

This is the picture of our family English bulldog Bandit with Ryan Saba. In this picture Bandit is 10-weeks old and Ryan is 23 working for Horn Point Laboratory and about to start a master's program at the University of Maryland. On the day the picture was taken, Ryan drove from Cambridge, Md., just to see Bandit. They were inseparable: Ryan would be wrestling with the little puppy, taking him for walks (mainly carrying him in his hands), turning Bandit into the next Hollywood star by taking countless pictures and videos and letting the puppy fall asleep in his arms exhausted from all the play. This picture was taken three years ago, just days before the tragic car accident took Ryan away from us and Bandit. This picture of a smiling young man and his beloved puppy will always be very special and dear to our family and everyone who knew Ryan. Today Bandit is a 3-year-old beautiful and loving



dog who is full of energy and who will always remind us of that special connection he had with Ryan and the connection we will always have with Bandit.

— KATE SABA,
FAIRFAX STATION

Charlie At the Pool

Mary-Alice Cohen of Fairfax Station sent these pictures with her 'precious Pomeranian pet, Charlie.' He was too scared to join her in a friend's swimming pool.



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photos: Mary O'Malley



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Pay It Forward with Candy Bars Goes Viral at WSHS

**“Throw Shine”
messages captured
on Mars Candy video.**

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

There was a girl in Audrey Wever’s math class at West Springfield High School last year that could use some cheering up, so as part of Audrey’s covert effort to “throw shine,” around the school, she discreetly dropped off a 3 Musketeers bar and message of encouragement that made the girl’s day. It was part of her and fellow student Rodney Wrice’s effort last year to spread positive vibes around that grew into something they never imagined.

“It felt so good, you can be a really good stranger,” Wever said.

Through the power of the Internet, teenage idealism, and candy bars with positive messages, the students’ plan grew into a school-wide feeling of togetherness and a video by Mars Candy thrusting Wever and Wrice into a nationwide 3 MUSKETEERS #ThrowShine campaign. “It got so big, very unexpected,” said Wever.

IT ALL STARTED last fall when Rodney Wrice saw a Throw Shine video that 3 Musketeers put out, and it gave him an idea to do the same thing at West Springfield, a “pay-it-forward,” effort to spread good feelings. There was negativity and cyber bullying going on in the world, and he wanted to do something about it locally.

According to Mars Candy, the 3 MUSKETEERS #ThrowShine campaign started last fall with a message on each candy bar and videos designed to create an environment for young people to give props to their peers or make someone feel good. It is the positive counterpart to the isolation and embarrassment that comes with “throwing shade,” an internet slang term for being negative towards something or someone.

The two students went out, bought some 3 Musketeer bars, hand wrote some positive messages of their own, anonymously placing them in lockers, desks, and other locations so the intended parties would get them. They had to be discreet so no one associated the effort with them. “I would come in at like 6:20 in the morning, we would hand write all the notes,” said Wever.

As more candy bars and notes went out, Wrice created a Twitter account, and more students started following it, posting pictures of the bars and messages they received. “The Twitter account was noticed by our community management team who brought it to the attention of Mars, who then made the decision to send 2,800 bars to the school,” said Lori Shachtman, a spokesperson for the ThrowShine campaign.

“[Mars Candy] called Mr. Mukai,” the West Springfield principal Wrice said, “he



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

Audrey Wever and Rodney Wrice were throwing shine, via candy bars at West Springfield High School.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Audrey Wever and Rodney Wrice’s positive message activity got praise from Fairfax County officials last spring.

emailed us, he was really excited about it.”

It wasn’t long before Mars sent a video team from Warhorse Filmmaker to tape a

video at West Springfield to capture the ThrowShine feeling around the school. With the cameras rolling, “we just talked about



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Social media played a big role getting the message around.

everything, it took the whole school day,” Wever said.

Mukai had a speaking part in the video as well. Film releases were signed by all, and when the crew left that day last spring, there was a long wait, longer than either of them had imagined.

“I don’t know what took them so long,” said Wrice.

“I was checking YouTube every day for two weeks,” added Wever.

In late June, at 1 a.m., Wrice saw the link. “I watched it first and sent her the link,” to Wever, who was in Germany on vacation.

WITH A TWITTER LINK, pictures on the internet, and a YouTube video, social media played a big part, which they learned from as well. “It opened doors on what we could do,” said Wever. The positivity of the whole effort was part of their Christian background, and during the process, Fairfax County got wind of the Throw Shine campaign at West Springfield in March.

“We won the Fairfax County peace award for our school,” said Wever. Wrice is off to college this year, but Wever plans on continuing with the positive message scenario during her senior year at West Springfield.

“I’m glad I did it, it was a good experience,” she said.

West Springfield High School is being renovated as well, so Principal Mukai is planning on adding a “throw shine,” element to the new look. “We’re going to have a positive mural dedicated to Audrey and Rodney,” he said.

See the West Springfield Throwing Shine video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=hJ0kpeWF-cA&feature=youtu.be.

Beating the Odds

Department of Family Services celebrates 2017 high school graduation.

BY JOAN BRADY

The room at the Waterford in Springfield, buzzes with happy chatter over a low mix of upbeat tunes. Framing the space are posters that celebrate the uniqueness of each graduate.

Fourteen young people were celebrated last Friday at the annual Fairfax County Department of Family Services High School Graduation Celebration.

For the young people in this room, children who were removed from their biological families due to a range of abuse and neglect and moved between foster and group homes, the challenges that stood between them and a diploma were significant.

Graduation rates for children raised in foster care are 49.6 percent less than the national average and the statistics on college graduates are even lower. Having a high school diploma significantly increases the range of job opportunities and earning potential.

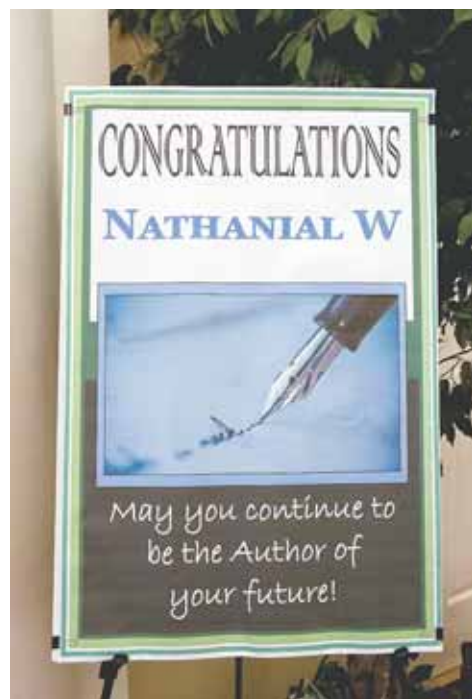
"Instead of giving up, you continued to move forward. In spite of all you have been through, you achieved this milestone. Because of your hard work and the support of people both in-and outside of this room, we are able to be here to celebrate you." The room cheered at the words of Chauncey Strong, foster care and adoption supervisor.

The event, planned by Natalie Sposato, Fairfax County Department of Family Services, life skills coordinator, is intended to keep this milestone from going unnoticed. "A high school diploma can never be taken away. It's something that should be acknowledged and celebrated," said Sposato. Together with the support of the Department of Family Services staff and members of the community, the event included a buffet, giveaways, certificates and speeches. And, at every opportunity, the proceedings were paused to give all of the graduates one more big cheer.

TWO SPEAKERS, young adults whose childhoods mirrored those of the new grads, encouraged that this is just the beginning. Cordelia Cranshaw, a foster children advocate, motivational speaker, licensed graduate social worker and foster care alum, told the recent graduates that education had been the key to her own success. She encouraged the new grads to be their own advocates and reminded social work professionals to listen to their charges and to remember that the life they are trying to influence, is not their own.

Dionte Fitts, assistant manager at Jersey Mike's in Leesburg and foster care alumni, encouraged the new grads to dig down to discover what makes them happy so that they can find their own destiny. To succeed, he advised, they must believe in themselves and not give up. He told them to remember that being in foster care isn't their fault.

Nine graduates were celebrated in person, each toasted by a member of their so-



COURTESY PHOTOS



Wells + Associates has been working with the county for 15 years and, for the past four, they have designed and printed the posters celebrating each graduate at the annual graduation.

cial work team and given an opportunity to say a few words. There was clapping, cheering and even some tears. Adults expressed pride in their young charges' accomplishments and the young adults, both shyly and exuberantly, showed their own pride in themselves and appreciation for the support they had received from the support group represented in the room.

Nathaniel (Nate) Walters of Alexandria, tossed aside the microphone, his self-confidence and sense of humor carrying across the room. Walters told the crowd, which included his mom, that when his father died and his mother couldn't meet his needs, he ended up in foster care. Older now, he has spent time in "independent living" and has learned the hard way what happens when you don't manage your money carefully. He advised the crowd that they should avoid what he called the "rice diet" that has, at

times, had to be his staple.

He talked about hanging out at a local teen center, where he noticed that none of the other youths ever helped the woman who manned the front desk. When she needed help, he began to help her. And when she learned of his graduation from high school, she had a card for him, in it was \$20 and a note wishing him good luck. She made sure he understood that she doesn't give money away lightly, even to family members. Walters really needed that money. Without it, he would not have been able to get to work. "She loved me," Walters said, "She helped me." He says he is thankful for his trials, because they have made him who he is today.

Christian Basubi, now a college student at George Washington University, shared that foster care was "the most wonderful thing that had ever happened [to him]."

2017 GRADUATION SPONSORS

The following sponsors made donations toward food, decorations and gifts for the graduates: Bernie L. Bates Foundation, Inc.; Central Park Funland; Chantilly Costco; Laser Quest; Potomac Nationals; Psi Alpha Alpha Chapter; Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.; Starbucks from VPS; Uptown Alley/Manassas; Washington Nationals; Walmart-Fair Lakes; and Wells + Associates.

When he was initially placed in care, he was new to this country and learning English as a second language. Everyone he met in his ESL classes was an adult, not a peer.

He expressed his appreciation for all of the support he has received while in care and particularly to have been part of Fairfax Families4kids, a county mentoring program, which provided him with a supportive community of youths and mentors with whom he could spend time on those lonely weekends. "It wasn't easy," said Basubi. "It's still not easy. But I'm doing it little by little. I know I will get somewhere."

"How we engage with our youth is so important. If the interaction is good, they will remember it. If the interaction is bad, they will remember it. ... Today, to hear so many of our graduates publicly acknowledge their social workers and other social work professionals made me proud," said Strong.

Wells + Associates has been working with the county for 15 years and for the past four, they have designed and printed the posters celebrating each graduate at the annual graduation. Wells considers its partnership with the county to be part of its corporate responsibility. "We recognize that it takes a village and as a member of the community, we believe it's our job to be part of that village," said Melissa (Missy) Jackson.

FOR SOME, the graduation was another sad reminder of a young life violently cut short earlier this month. Mentors, social work staff and members of his family, including his twin brother, gathered to celebrate Leonte, who aged out of foster care several years ago. Leonte was determined to earn his high school diploma and graduated last February at 23-years-old. He was slated to be one of the speakers at the day's event.

Leonte is described as having been a kind, loving and compassionate young man. As a little boy, his smile lit up the room and his dance moves were legendary. His death serves as a stark reminder that the challenges for children who grow up in foster care don't end when they age out into young adulthood.

If interested in making a difference in the life of a child in foster care and after they age out, consider becoming a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) or becoming a mentor with Fairfax Families4Kids.

Joan Brady is a professional photographer; award-winning columnist; co-owner of Spirited Media, Inc., mentor and advocate for current and former foster children; a volunteer with paws4people and others; and a resident of Great Falls. Reach her at joan@joanbradyphotography.com.

ENTERTAINMENT

Send entertainment notes to the Connection at connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/. Dated announcements should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event.

WEDNESDAY/JULY 26

Pop Up Adventure Playground. 10 a.m.-noon at Kutner Park, 3901 Jermantown Road, Fairfax. LEGO, Games, crafts, coding and more. This program is free, no registration required, and all ages welcome. Child care is not provided. Parents or guardians are required to attend with children not old enough to walk to and play in the park on their own. Call 703-385-7858 or email karen.lussier@fairfaxva.gov.

THURSDAY/JULY 27

Summer Under the Stars Concert. 8 p.m. Veterans Amphitheater (adjacent to City Hall), 10455 Armstrong St., Fairfax. City of Fairfax Band. Visit www.fairfaxband.org or call 703-385-7855.

FRIDAY/JULY 28

Rock the Block. 6:30-9:30 p.m. at Old Town Square, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. “The Reagan Years,” ’80’s band is featured. Food available, Bring lawn chairs or blankets to sit on, children can wear swim suits and bring towels to enjoy the spray pad! No pets allowed except service animals. For more details visit www.fairfaxva.gov/rocktheblock

Topgolf and a DJ. 7-10 p.m. at Topgolf, 6625 S. Van Dorn St. Golf, music from Silver DJ, food and drink. Visit topgolf.com/us/alexandria/ or call 703-924-2600.

SATURDAY/JULY 29

Taste of Springfield. noon-6 p.m. outdoors event at the Springfield Town Center, 6500 Springfield Mall Drive. Locally focused, family friendly ‘feast-ival’ with tastings, entertainments and activities for all ages. Weather dependent. Visit www.tasteofspringfield.com.

Scarf Painting Workshop. noon-3 p.m. at the Fairfax Art League Village Gallery, 3950 University Drive. The Fairfax Art League invites the public to a hand painted scarf workshop. \$10. Call 703-569-8760.

Mount Vernon Nights Concert Series. 6 p.m. at Workhouse Arts Center, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. Free musical performance by Jarekus Singleton. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/ performances or call 703-780-7518.

SUNDAY/JULY 30

G-Scale Model Train Show. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Washington, Virginia & Maryland Garden Railway Society (WVMGRS) will have a G-Scale train display running. 4 and under free; ages 5-15, \$2; ages 16 and older,\$4. Visit www.fairfax-station.org or call 703-425-9225.

Yoga on the Square. 10 a.m. at Old Town Square, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Bring a yoga mat and a water bottle. Call 703-385-7858.

MONDAY/JULY 31

Funday Monday for Children. 10:30 a.m. in Old Town Square, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Storytelling and songs. Weather permitting. Visit www.fairfaxva.gov or call 703-385-7855.

TUESDAY/AUG. 1

Night Out at Random Hills. 6-8 p.m.

Cirque du Soleil’s “OVO” – Main characters, from left: The Foreigner, Ladybug, and Master Flipo.

PHOTO COURTESY OF
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL



Soaring into Eagle Bank Arena

Cirque du Soleil’s “OVO” brings colorful imagination to GMU stage.

BY DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

Skillful daredevils with big, off-beat imaginations will be arriving in Northern Virginia. It is Cirque du Soleil’s touring production of “OVO” with seven performances at the Eagle Bank Arena in Fairfax.

“OVO” starts when a larger than life “community of colorful curious insects is disrupted when a most colorful funky blue fly called The Foreigner unexpectedly arrives with a special package: a mysterious large egg,” said Cirque du Soleil publicist, Nicolas Chabot in a recent interview. OVO is egg in Portuguese, said Chabot.

“What was once a quiet, thriving community of ants, spiders, crickets, dragon flies, even some not so frightening mosquitoes and fleas all have to deal with something new in their midst,” added Chabot. The wise, eccentric Master Flipo, chief of the insect community, is startled. But a shy Ladybug senses that the community will be disrupted for the good.

“OVO” was created by Deborah Colker, the first

female director in Cirque du Soleil history. “Colker wanted to develop a family friendly experience bringing the secret life of the colorful insects often hidden away at our feet to view,” said Chabot. “And the bugs are not creepy at all.

“The ‘OVO’ community is visually striking, full of quirky insects who perform astounding physical stunts,” said Chabot. They rush about to eat, crawl, play, annoy each other, and even look for friendships. All with non-stop energy.

The cast of OVO comprises 50 athletic performing artists. They will perform in a center ring, on walls, on high wires and even perform hold-one’s-breath feats in the heights of the Eagle Bank Arena. As they perform, they will jump, contort, tumble, juggle and twist to defy gravity and audience expectations. A lively seven-piece band will add energy to the show, playing original music composed by Berna Ceppas based upon the Bossa Nova, Funk, Electro and even Samba.

Bright, colorful costumes will display the acrobatic insects in lively groupings of energetic cute bugs. “OVO’ will showcase the insects working together to form and celebrate their community,” said Chabot.

“OVO” is a big, exciting picture book that will come alive through human imagination and the skills of performers out to please the audience; no matter what age. “OVO” aims to be wide-eyed fun, showing that colorful bugs of many kinds can live peacefully together.

Where & When

Cirque du Soleil presents “OVO” at Eagle Bank Arena, George Mason University (Fairfax Campus), 4500 Patriot Circle, Fairfax. Performances Aug. 16-20, 2017. Doors open one hour before performance. Tickets: \$39-\$167. Premium Producer tickets and special price family pack tickets packages also available. Call 703-993-3000 or visit www.eaglebankarena.com.

Fairfax. Wear comfortable clothes and bring a mat. Class will take place in Old Town Square at the pergola. Weather permitting. Visit www.fairfaxva.gov/.

THURSDAY/AUG. 3

Flora Fauna for Kids. 11-11:45 a.m. at Hidden Pond Nature Center, 8511 Greeley Blvd., Springfield. Learn about fish in the pond. \$5. Ages 3-6. Call 703-451-9588.

The Excellent Drivers concert.

6:30-8:30 p.m. at Old Town Square, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Musical, family-friendly event. Free.

Visit www.fairfaxva.gov/.

FRIDAY/AUG.4

Main Street Clarinet Quartet concert. 7-8 p.m. at Old Town Plaza, 3955 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax. Musical, family-friendly event. Free. Visit fairfaxva.gov/.

Bingo. 7 p.m. at Fire Station 3, 4081 University Drive, Fairfax. Smoke free. \$1,000 jackpot. Visit www.fairfaxva.gov/.

Topgolf and a DJ. 7-10 p.m. at Topgolf, 6625 S. Van Dorn St. Golf, music from Rush Hour DJ, food and drink. Visit topgolf.com/us/

alexandria/ or call 703-924-2600.

SATURDAY/AUG. 5

Singles Dinner and Movie Night. 5 p.m. at Uncle Julio’s at Fairfax Corner, 4251 Fairfax Corner Ave. \$32 at door includes dinner, soda, tip and movie ticket. Sponsored by New Beginnings, a support group for separated/divorced men and women. Call 301-924-4101 or visit www.newbeginningsusa.org.

Topgolf and a DJ. 7-10 p.m. at Topgolf, 6625 S. Van Dorn St. Golf, music from Tnyce DJ, food and drink. Visit topgolf.com/us/alexandria/ or call 703-924-2600.

SUNDAY/AUG. 6

Yoga on the Square. 10 a.m. at Old Town Square, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Bring a yoga mat and a water bottle. Call 703-385-7858.

MONDAY/AUG. 7

Funday Monday. 10:30 a.m. at Old Town Square, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Mr. Skip will perform for children. Free. Call 703-385-7858 or visit www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts.

WEDNESDAY/AUG. 9

Tai Chi. 6:30-7:30 a.m. at Old Town Square, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Weather permitting. Wear comfortable clothes and bring a mat. Class will take place in Old Town Square at the pergola. Free. Call 703-385-7858 or visit www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts.

THURSDAY/AUG. 10

Flora Fauna for Kids. 11-11:45 a.m. at Hidden Pond Nature Center, 8511 Greeley Blvd., Springfield. Learn about “dirt critters,” in the area. \$5. Ages 3-6. Call 703-451-9588.

SUNDAY/AUG. 13

Yoga on the Square. 10 a.m. at Old Town Square, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Bring a yoga mat and water bottle. Call 703-385-7858.

Model Train Show. 1-4 p.m. at Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road. The Northern Virginia NTRAK members will hold a N gauge T-TRAK model train show. Museum members, free; adults 16 and over, \$4; children 5-15, \$2; under 4, free. Information on the museum and shows is at www.fairfax-station.org or call 703-425-9225.

Meet the Artist Reception. noon-3 p.m. at the Workhouse Arts Center, 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. Art Quilts Exhibit by fiber artist Marisela Rumberg, exhibit runs Aug. 9-Sept. 3. Visit www.MariselaRumberg.com.

Meet the Author. 2 p.m. at the Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center, 10209 Main St., Fairfax. “Reston: A Revolutionary Idea.” Author and biographer Kristina Alcorn will discuss the history of Reston and sign and sell her book, “In His Own Words: Stories from the Extraordinary Life of Reston’s Founder, Robert E. Simon, Jr.” Free. Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center, 10209 Main St., Fairfax. 703-385-8414.

THURSDAY/AUG. 17

Flora Fauna for Kids. 11-11:45 a.m. at Hidden Pond Nature Center, 8511 Greeley Blvd., Springfield. Learn about insects in the area. \$5. Ages 3-6. Call 703-451-9588.

Lucia Valentine Concert. 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Old Town Square, 3999 University Drive. Grab dinner at one of the many restaurants in downtown, and listen to great music. Free. Call 703-385-7858.

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PET CONNECTION

PEOPLE & PETS OF SPRINGFIELD

Seeing Mina in All Her Glory

"Mina is a cuddly girl who loves to play! You can find her under the dining table curled up on the chair cushions, behind doors playing hide and seek or in my arms. She's a calico kitty and is only a year and a half old and is always scheming to eat a treat. Mina has really taken over all the hearts of everyone she meets and is very friendly. She hates being left alone and will follow you everywhere. My favorite thing about Mina is that she always knows when someone is sad and will cuddle up next to you to make you feel better. Mina is truly a best friend! In fact, come see Mina in all her glory (aka taking naps and trying to hunt small beetles) on her Instagram page @minathcalicocat."



Javeria Ijaz, Springfield, student at George Mason Student and Pink employee. Pet: Mina the cat, 1.5 years old.

Beau for Beautiful

"Beau is a two-year-old Great Pyrenees. We named him Beau because it means beautiful in French and we thought it suited him because he's a really handsome dog! He sheds a lot but he's very playful and gets attached easily to people. Not too long ago he even ran away from me for about five minutes because he didn't get to say bye to one of his 'BFFs,' who's my friend. He's really friendly too and when he likes you he'll jump up and try to give you a really big hug! Even though he's a big dog, he's still not as big as his mom and dad (his owners). He can also notice when someone's injured — when my mom had a surgery he would help walk her to the bathroom and would sniff the spot she had her surgery and start whimpering because he was sad."



Reem Almasary, Springfield, college student. Pet: Beau, Great Pyrenees, 2 years old

French Fries for Nemo

"Nemo is a really feisty, saucy and angry dog even though he's super tiny. But once he loves you he loves you forever. He's two years old. He also has a leg condition so sometimes he limps on his back leg and continues to run or walk anyways because he's so happy and excited to run around. He has a lot of energy and tries barking at everything bigger than him — which is most things. Nemo also has a very squeaky bark so he's not as intimidating as he tries to be. He tries to be really feisty and angry but underneath he's a softie. He also really likes eating French fries!"



Aziz Alimam, Springfield, Hertz employee. Pet: Nemo, Pomeranian, 2 years old

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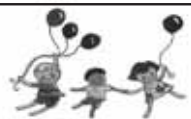
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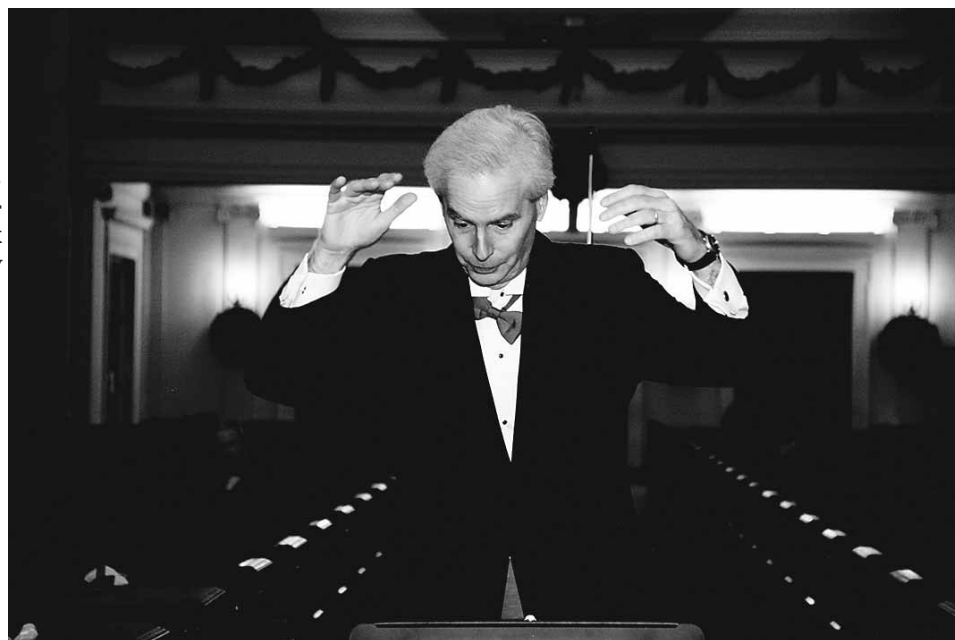
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Improvements

PEOPLE

Doug Mears, artistic director, Fairfax Choral Society



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FAIRFAX CHORAL SOCIETY

Bringing Masterworks to Fairfax

Doug Mears, Fairfax Choral Society long time artistic director to retire.

BY DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

After nearly four decades shaping and inspiring the Fairfax Choral Society (FCS) to be at the forefront of Washington area choruses; artistic director Doug Mears will be retiring this fall. One of the largest choral groups in the region, the FCS provides classes and opportunities to perform for more than 300 choral singers from preschool through adult.

"His talent, passion and creative programming have inspired and educated our singers," said long-time FCS member and Board Chair Barbara Tuset. "During his tenure he also provided the chorus with extraordinary experiences with guest composers and conductors. Each performance left us hungry for the next challenge. Doug will be missed by all of us at FCS."

When asked what kept him so committed to the FCS, Mears said, "The opportunity to collaborate with talented, hard-working, dedicated, and inspiring singers; and with great composers from throughout music history, to present masterworks of choral music for our community and the world."

Mears noted that "Choral singing continues to be the most popular form of participation in the performing arts." He cited national data that nearly 25 percent of American households have at least one choral singer; around 42.6 million choral singers, both adult and children.

"The FCS artistic staff can certainly attest to the value of choral singing for young people, as we have seen its impact on our own singers, ever since the FCS Youth Choruses began," added Mears.



Fairfax Choral Society Adult Chorus

Details

For additional information about the retirement of Fairfax Choral Society (FCS) artistic director Doug Mears and the upcoming FCS season, visit www.fairfaxchoralsociety.org or call 703-642-3277.

While Mears noted many memorable musical achievements, "perhaps most memorable have been the opportunities we have shared, offering our music for special and significant occasions in our members lives; weddings, funerals, retirements. And, of course, to see children who began their musical training in the FCS Youth Choruses develop into outstanding musicians and continue their musical aspirations professionally and as members of our volunteer adult Symphonic Chorus."

Mears went on to say, "Tragically, funding for the arts in our region has been on a downward spiral in recent years. We believe that music is not a luxury but a necessity."

Concert pianist, composer and conductor Paul Leavitt has been named Interim Director, Fairfax Choral Society. Leavitt begins his tenure after a celebratory concert for Doug Mears at National Presbyterian Church, Washington, D.C. on Nov. 12, 2017.

Under Leavitt's leadership, the Fairfax Choral Society's mission will continue as it has for the past 56 years; to enrich lives through the performance, education, and appreciation of choral art.

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Haven of Northern Virginia provides support, compassion, information and resources to the bereaved and seriously ill. To become a Haven volunteer, please call 703-941-7000 to request an orientation. Volunteers must complete a 30-hour training and commit to one year of service answering Haven phones (2.5 hours weekly). Next training is scheduled for fall 2017.

AUG. 2-30

Fit for Life Classes. 11 a.m.-noon at the Bruen Chapel United Methodist Church, 3035 Cedar Lane, Fairfax. Fairfax Fit for Life Classes are sponsored by the Shepherd's Center of Oakton-Vienna to improve strength, balance and mobility for older adults. Call 703-281-0538 or email eileentarr1@verizon.net.

THROUGH AUG. 25

Summer Lunches. The Fairfax County Public Schools Office of Food and Nutrition Services will be hosting the FEEDS (Food for Every Child to Eat During Summer) BBQ program, a USDA-funded program is free to all children 18 years and under and \$2 for adults. There is no registration involved, and open to everyone. Meal service will be provided at the following sites Monday-Friday, 11:30-1 p.m. No service on July 3 and 4. In the Springfield area, FEEDS is offered at the following schools:

- ❖ Springfield Gardens Apartments, 6116 Cumberland Ave.
- ❖ Springfield Square Apartments, 7000 Rhoden Court, starts at noon
- ❖ Chelsea Square Apartments, 5734 Backlick Road, starts at noon

ONGOING

Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke serves those 50 and older who no longer drive. **Volunteer drivers** are needed for trips (Monday-Friday) to medical appointments and companion shopping within the Fairfax/Burke area. **Office workers** are needed to answer phones in the SCFB office (Monday-Friday) to match drivers and those who need rides. Call 703-323-4788.

Positive Parenting Strategies Course. At PHILLIPS, 7010 Braddock Road, Annandale. A series of classes and in home consultations taught by PHILLIPS' counselors. Open to all local families. Call Stacy Stryjewski at 703-658-9054.

LETTER

FROM PAGE 6

plus years and was vice president at one time of the railroad union so my mother was very workers rights oriented and my father's family were bankers. My paternal grandfather was vice president of National Boulevard Bank in Chicago. So I get an interesting perspective.

It does not make sense to me that they are going after this failsafe program for the most disadvantaged of our country. This is a safety net. There are so many other programs that need to be examined. But I cannot understand this assault on the human condition of our citizens. There are black ops programs that get unlimited funding. The waste is in these special interest programs. No one is investigating the \$100 toothpicks. Somehow the health and welfare programs are the target for cutting when in actuality government waste in these other pet projects should be addressed. We have projects that have no accountability.

Valerie Benson
Burke

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An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them.
-Werner Heisenberg

Taking Care Of Business



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

The cats. The car. The dentist. The pancreatic enzymes. It was a week that typically isn't. As often as my credit card was swiped these past few days, I'm amazed its magnetic strip is still magnetized. To quote my deceased mother, Celia: "It's enough already."

Oh well, what's done is done, though it definitely needed doing. And aside from the fact that I didn't have the actual money, fortunately I had the available credit, which I was grateful to have had. I mean, how long can you put off necessary evils/expenditures before they rear their ugly consequences? And though money doesn't grow on trees (linen actually), credit seems to, and so the to-do list now has some cross-outs/"has-dones" finally.

Now the anxiety about neglecting the "to-dos" is replaced by the worry about the cost/need-to-pay the "having-dones." Nevertheless, the cats have had their vaccinations shot current.

The car now has a passenger window that goes down – and back up, a check-engine light that no longer illuminates, a blower that will now provide heat in the winter and a defogger when needed, and as it turns out a bit of unexpected air conditioning.

The dentist has referred me to an oral surgeon (since the teeth were both "unrestorable"/not root canal candidates) who will extract two teeth from my mouth and hundreds more from my bank account/probably credit card – again, but no doubt get me back on a course of dental correction.

The pancreatic enzymes, the most expensive bottle of pills I buy (I consume upwards of 55 pills per day) is an expense I incur every three months and does something to help my immune system keep the lung cancer in-check, a priority if there ever was one.

Paying to keep on playing (so to speak), by maintaining this kind of normalcy enhances the feeling that life is indeed still being played. And not that my attitude/philosophy in such responsibilities is totally affected by yours truly having been diagnosed with a "terminal" form of cancer: non-small cell lung cancer, stage IV, to be specific, but as the old punchline says: "It doesn't hurt." And avoiding hurt is definitely part of the fighting-cancer strategy; along with avoiding stress, eating healthy, exercising and boosting one's immune system.

I guess what I'm realizing that I have two lives, sort of, the usual and customary life: work, play, day-to-day stuff and the cancer life: lab work, chemotherapy, scans, oncologist, pills, lifestyle changes, etc. On some days, they are parallel. On other days, they intersect. And though they may be separate, they are inter-related. What benefits one is likely to positively affect the other.

Additionally, a negative in one life will likewise have an adverse consequence in the other. However, the requirements to maintain their respective lives is different. Yet balance/co-existence must be maintained in order for one to remain "together."

Two separate halves will not make for a responsible whole, but rather lead to an emotional one. And if there's one attribute that a cancer patient/survivor must have, it is emotional wherewithal. Failure to do so in one's cancer life will likely spill over into the non-cancer life (and vice-versa) and cause a kind of an adult version of failure to thrive.

Cancer might win the battle in the end but you can't let it win the battle in the interim. Fulfilling your every-day responsibilities helps give that life the kind of accomplishment that aids and abets in your fight against your cancer life. Moreover, handling your cancer life gives you the confidence and optimism to live your non-cancer life.

Granted, the two lives might not exactly be the best of friends, but they must be partners of a sort. The sort that is independent, appreciative, respectful and considerate.

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

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