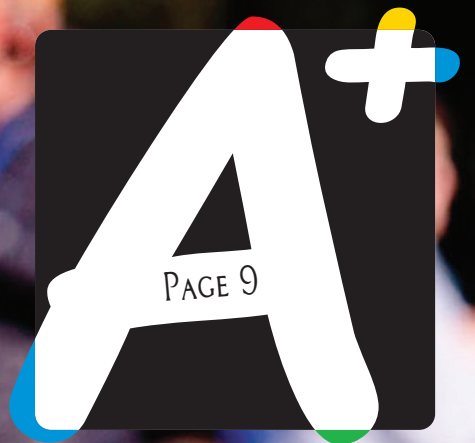


# The Arlington Connection



A man kneels at a gravesite in Section 60 of Arlington National Cemetery during the Dec. 16 Wreaths Across America event.

ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 6 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 10

PHOTO BY MARK MOGLE/THE CONNECTION

## Wreaths Across America

NEWS, PAGE 3

### Housing Conservation District Approved

NEWS, PAGE 8

### Christmas Angel Warms Hearts of Children

NEWS, PAGE 4

DECEMBER 20-26, 2017

ONLINE AT [WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](http://WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM)





**Express Lanes are coming to I-66 Inside the Beltway in December 2017.** Soon, anyone can travel these lanes during rush hour. If carpooling, you can travel for free with an E-ZPass Flex. If driving alone, you'll need to pay a toll with an E-ZPass.

Learn more at [66expresslanes.org](http://66expresslanes.org) and enjoy your toll-free carpool ride.



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Call us toll-free at 877-762-7824





A convoy of trucks carrying more than 245,000 wreaths arrives at Arlington National Cemetery Dec. 16 for the annual Wreaths Across America event.



Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke places a wreath in Section 60 of Arlington National Cemetery during the Dec. 16 Wreaths Across America event.

## Wreaths Across America Thousands turn out to volunteer at annual event.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
THE CONNECTION

**M**ore than 65,000 volunteers from across the nation braved the freezing temperatures to participate in Wreaths Across America Dec. 16 at Arlington National Cemetery, marking the 26th

year for the annual ritual of placing wreaths at the headstones of America's veterans.

The annual event, founded by Maine wreath-maker Morrill Worcester, honors those who served in the U.S. Armed Forces. A total of 245,000 wreaths were placed in Arlington National Cemetery with 1.2 million wreaths placed on markers across the country in 1,238 locations.

A Wreaths Across America caravan traveled to Arlington from Columbia Falls, Maine, where the wreaths were made. Ceremonies were held at the Tomb of the Unknowns and the gravesite of President John F. Kennedy. Funding for the wreaths is provided by corporate and individual donations.

See [www.wreathsassamerica.org](http://www.wreathsassamerica.org).



Former Navy SEAL and Medal of Honor recipient Ed Byers volunteers as part of Team Bear during the Wreaths Across America event Dec. 16 at Arlington National Cemetery.



Craig Gross of Tarpon Springs, Fla., plays a song at his son's gravesite during the Dec. 16 Wreaths Across America event at Arlington National Cemetery. Cpl. Frank R. Gross was killed by an IED while on patrol in Afghanistan on July 16, 2011.



A tribute to Michael Stansbery Jr. is placed at his gravesite Dec. 16 during the Wreaths Across America event at Arlington National Cemetery. Stansbery was killed in Afghanistan on July 30, 2010.



Wreaths Across America founder Morrill Worcester observes a wreath laying at the Tomb of the Unknowns Dec. 16 at Arlington National Cemetery.

Members of Team Bear pose for a group photo Dec. 16 at the Wreaths Across America event at Arlington National Cemetery. The group raises funds and volunteers each year at the event.



A volunteer reflects at a gravesite in Section 60 of Arlington National Cemetery during the Dec. 16 Wreaths Across America event.



# OPINION

# Merry Christmas

Whether you believe the Christmas story literally or in spirit, you know it is the story of joy, hope and love, with the promise of redemption.

**T**he pages of the Connection Newspapers (including the Alexandria Gazette Packet, the Mount Vernon Gazette, the Potomac Almanac and the Centre View) have been full of holiday spirit beginning before Thanksgiving. Group and individual efforts to help the needy, holiday parades, Santa arriving by boat, Santa arriving by horse-drawn carriage, Santa arriving at the Malls, tree lightings, Menorah lightings, stories of giving, secular celebrations, religious celebrations. Shopping locally. Giving locally. Christmas is about the birth of Jesus Christ. Whether you believe the Christmas story literally or in spirit, you know it is the story of joy, hope and love, with the promise of redemption.

It is also about embracing the teachings of Jesus: to love thy neighbor as thyself; to help the needy; to feed the hungry and clothe the poor; to care for those who are sick; to invite and welcome strangers; to treat others as you would have them treat you.

#### **EDITORIAL**

**Matthew 7:12:** “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

#### **Matthew 25:35-40:**

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one

of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

**SO LET US SHARE** the verse relating the birth of Jesus from the Bible, Luke 2: 4-19:

“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife,

being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

“And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

“And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is

come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.”

— MARY KIMM

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

## Editor's Note About the Rest of 2017

This is our last regular edition of 2017. Next week, after Christmas, we will publish our annual Children's Issue, devoted entirely to the artwork and writing of local students. We have more submissions from local students than ever, and so some children's and teens' artwork and writing will spill over into the first week of the new year.

Our next regular edition will publish Jan. 3-4, 2018, with deadline for content and advertising of Dec. 30 (late ads accepted).

In the meantime you can reach the editors

at editors@connectionnewspapers.com and sales/marketing/advertising at sales@connectionnewspapers.com.

Find digital replica editions of recent papers at www.ConnectionNewspapers.com/PDFs

Past issues of the Connection back to 2008 are available at connectionarchives.com/PDF/Advertising information, Special Section details here www.connectionnewspapers.com/advertising

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## Christmas Angel Warms Hearts of Children

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
THE CONNECTION

**T**he weather outside is frightful but the room inside is delightful where almost 250 volunteers have signed up for OAR's Christmas Angel gift-wrapping party to wrap presents for children with incarcerated parents. Elizabeth Jones Valderrama, executive director of OAR says this is a 30-year tradition that began with picking five families to assist at a holiday staff party and then it just expanded from there. They have been holding the event at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church for the last 18 years.

She says this year they will be providing presents for 400 children. “We call every single family to be sure we have the names and ages of the children

and that we haven't missed a child. We ask about the child and what they would like to have for Christmas.” Jones says that when she recently talked to the guardian whose husband was incarcerated, “the mom teared up because these were the only presents her three children would receive this year.” Jones says another family has five children all in separate foster homes because both parents are incarcerated. “But we will get presents to all of them even though they aren't together.”

The volunteers hang their coats on the rack by the door, grab a slice of pizza and head for their assigned table where they find a list of children. Each table is loaded with multi-colored wrapping paper, tape and scissors as well as a list of children with information about gift preferences and handwritten notes by the

SEE ANGELS, PAGE 11



**Kevin Dolenc has come to St. Andrew's Church Dec. 13 to wrap presents for children whose parents are in jail. He says he donated this box of Hot Wheels cars.**

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Connection

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## PEOPLE



### Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town

Children are lined up at the Cherrydale Volunteer Fire House on Lee Highway Sunday, Dec. 17 waiting for Santa. A faint siren is heard in the distance. "He's coming. He's coming." A motorcycle escort can be seen in the distance followed by a red fire truck closely behind. "There he is riding on the top of the fire truck!" Santa climbs down the long silver ladder at the back of the truck, opens his bag and hands peppermint candy canes to children standing on the side of the street.



A line of children snakes past the hot cocoa and cookies in the Cherrydale Fire House on Sunday waiting their turn for a visit with Santa. The Cherrydale Volunteer Fire Department was founded in 1889, and the present Fire House was constructed in 1919.

PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION

## Why Not Read Local?

### Society of Children's Book Authors sponsors local contest.

BY EDEN BROWN  
THE CONNECTION

Barbara Carney-Coston has written her first book. Adults who buy it for children say they end up reading it themselves — and liking it. It's a good story, and it's got a bonus: three recipes from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan for dishes Carney-Coston grew up eating in her grandmother's kitchen.

Carney-Coston, an Arlington resident for more than 25 years, former substitute teacher at Jamestown Elementary School, co-PTA president at Jamestown, and member of the Advisory Committee on Instruction when the Science Focus school was just an idea, got her first book published after many years of writing, reading, and research. Leaving the National Geographic Society, where she created an award-winning web feature, she wrote for Highlights, Hopscotch, and Washington Parent magazines. Carney-Coston then had "one of those ideas that just wouldn't leave me alone." She had grown up with the story of her great grandparents' move from Croatia to Michigan. She decided to round out the story with research, and got so much information about the period of history — she knew she had a book. Her membership in the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators helped: they held a workshop about the importance of aligning research with the story, but keeping the story paramount. And the more she read about the immigrants she is descended from, the more she wanted to make a small subculture more visible. She has done that with her book, "To the Copper Country."

Carney-Coston says the book is of value to anyone going through an immigration: her great grandfather started out as a peasant in Croatia, took the risk of starting anew in America, selected by his family as the most likely prospect to succeed, and lived in a log cabin that was so open to the elements

that the grandparents told of brushing snow off the beds before they could sleep.

The story is primarily about the women who made the journey. Mihaela, the young protagonist, is 11.

In 1886, she embarks on a voyage from Croatia to the Keweenaw Peninsula, also known as Michigan's Copper Country. Her mother is a skilled herbal healer who needs to join her husband in the U.S. to heal his debilitating eye disease, but she loses her valuable herbs on arrival in New York. It is Mihaela who has to forage in Michigan to find the right herbs, while her mother ends up running a boarding house for multiple copper miners.

Mihaela has two younger brothers and Carney-Coston says she thinks the book serves both as a window into the emotions of children in difficult situations as well as addressing the role of a sister; she envisions an older sister reading it aloud to a younger brother.

Carney-Coston said the SCBWI is sponsoring a "Read Local Challenge" which features 55 books written by local writers from Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware, Washington, D.C., and Maryland. To learn more about the reading contest, see <http://mddewv.scbwi.org/read-local/>. Carney-Coston said she would also be happy to address groups — small or large — in local schools and libraries; she remains dedicated to Arlington as a founding (and active) member of the Arlington Women's Civic Alliance, a non-profit group established in 1993 to foster friendship and work together for the good of the community. To contact Carney-Coston for a visit to a school or other group, see: [www.barbaracarneycoston.com](http://www.barbaracarneycoston.com).



PHOTO BY ANNE-MARIE FENDRICK

**Barbara Carney-Coston.**

## Giving the Gift of Love

BY EDEN BROWN  
THE CONNECTION

There was something money cannot buy in the Carlin Springs Elementary School cafeteria on Saturday, Dec. 16. It was the Foster Care Holiday Party, held every year at this time, and it included parents, foster parents, volunteers, and children who had been embraced by foster parents, coming together to celebrate. These foster parents had given their time, and affection, to children who for various reasons, for varying amounts of time, needed to live in a family that was not their own.

Leslie and Robert (Bobby) Harden were enjoying the party with their two children. A while back they had been thinking about adopting a child when one of their colleagues mentioned the Foster Parent Program and said it was fun, enriching, and well-run. Since there was an information session approaching soon after, they signed up. Shortly after, a training session was available, so they signed up for that too. "The training was great," said Leslie Harden, "and the support is great." Before long, they had started fostering. They fostered their daughter Vanelope, and quite a few others, before they ended up adopting their daughter when her family could not take her back. They pursued a domestic adoption for their



**Bobby and Leslie Harden and their two children, Yanelope and Va'Kai.**

son Va'Kai.

Erica Serrano, the resource parent recruiter, for Arlington County Department of Human Services' Child and Family Services Division pointed out the number of donations that made the Holiday Party possible, including, food, beverages and entertainment. Serrano is always looking for more prospective foster parents to come to the information session. For more information, see:

<https://family.arlingtonva.us/foster-care/>.

PHOTO BY EDEN BROWN/THE CONNECTION

## Creative Approach to Gift-Giving

BY ASHLEY CLAIRE SIMPSON  
THE CONNECTION

No matter how old you are, or what holidays are on your radar, it's helpful to get a little creative with your gift-giving.

Arlington resident and native Northern Virginian Rebecca Jackson made the biggest purchase of her life earlier this year, so



**Alyssa Belmondo**



**Becca Jackson**

she's had to think extra resourcefully for the holidays.

"I just bought my first house, so it was hard to shop for the holidays this year while keeping a new mortgage payment in mind," Jackson said. "Plus, my family has five birthdays between late October and early January, so I have to buy a ton of presents all at once. My secrets: shop early, keep track, and use shopping 'assistants,' like apps and other

online sale alerts. When I see something I know a family member or friend would like, I buy it and store it until their next birthday or Christmas. I was completely finished with my Christmas, holiday and birthday shopping around Halloween this year. That way, I'm spending money throughout the year instead of all at once. Nerd alert: I keep track of all my gifts and spending in an Excel spreadsheet."

SEE CREATIVE, PAGE 9



# ENTERTAINMENT



## ‘Forty+ Or Minus’

**Jane Franklin Dance performance puts on “Forty+ Or Minus,” on Saturday, Jan. 13, followed by shows on Jan. 18 at 10:30 a.m., Jan. 20 and Jan. 27 at 7:30 p.m. at Theatre on the Run, 3700 S Four Mile Run Drive.. \$5 - \$22. Visit [www.janefranklin.com](http://www.janefranklin.com) or call 703-933-1111.**



## CALENDAR

Submit entertainment announcements at [www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/](http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/). The deadline is noon on Friday. Photos/artwork encouraged.

### ONGOING

**Holiday Hansel and Gretel.** Through Dec. 23, Thursday-Friday, 11 a.m.; Saturday-Sunday, 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. at Synetic Theater, 1800 S. Bell St. During the bustle of holiday crowds, Gretel tries to keep her brother, Hansel, out of trouble while their unengaged babysitter leaves Gretel to fend for them both. Visit [synetictheater.org/](http://synetictheater.org/) for more.

**“Crazy for You.”** Through Jan. 14, various times at the Signature Theatre, 4200 Campbell Ave. A musical comedy with Gershwin tunes including “I’ve Got Rhythm,” “Someone to Watch Over Me” and “Nice Work If You Can Get It” fuse with tap dancing. Visit [www.sigtheatre.org](http://www.sigtheatre.org) for more.

**Artists’ Exhibition.** Through Jan. 31, various times at the Courthouse Plaza lobby. Through the Lens of Frank Hallam Day and Anne Rowland images of Arlington’s built and natural environments. Visit [publicart.arlingtonva.us/](http://publicart.arlingtonva.us/) for more.

**Arlington Farmer’s Market.** Every Saturday, 8 a.m.-noon at the corner of N. 14th Street and N. Courthouse Road. A weekly celebration of local food including fresh produce, meats, dairy, cheese, baked goods, free range eggs, specialty items, cut flowers, plants and herbs. Email [csingiser@cfwdc.org](mailto:csingiser@cfwdc.org) or call 917-733-6402.

**FRESHFARM Market.** 3-7 p.m. on Tuesdays at 1900 Crystal Drive. Shop from local farmers and producers with seasonal fruits and vegetables, fresh-cut flowers, container plants and herbs, farm-raised eggs, all-natural meats, artisan baked goods, and specialty foods. Visit [www.crystalcity.org](http://www.crystalcity.org) for more.

**Mobile Bike Repair.** 8 a.m.-3 p.m. on Thursdays at 1900 Crystal Drive. Drop off your bike on Thursday morning and have it tuned up and ready to ride before heading home. Email [DC@velofix.com](mailto:DC@velofix.com), or phone

855-VELO-FIX for more.

**Food Truck Thursdays.** 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at 1900 Crystal Drive and 201 12th St. Actual truck schedules are subject to change so be sure to follow your favorites. Visit [www.crystalcity.org](http://www.crystalcity.org) for more.

**Healthy Lifestyle Runs.** Saturdays, 9 a.m. at Roosevelt Island, George Washington Memorial Parkway. American Cancer Society partners with parkrun USA to promote fitness in the fight against cancer. Free. Visit [www.parkrun.us/rooseveltislanddc/](http://www.parkrun.us/rooseveltislanddc/) for more.

**Friday Night Live.** 8 p.m. Fridays at the Church at Clarendon, 1210 N. Highland St., Suite A. Local musicians perform. Free. Visit [1bc.org](http://1bc.org) for more.

**Arlington’s Historical Museum Open on First Wednesdays.** The Arlington Historical Museum is open to the public on the first Wednesday of every month from 12:30-3:30 p.m. The museum consists of exhibits chronicling Arlington County’s history from Native American settlements up to the present day. The museum will continue to be open on Saturdays and Sundays from 1-4 p.m. Admission is free. The museum is located in the former 1891 Hume School building at 1805 S. Arlington Ridge Road. Contact Garrett Peck at 571-243-1113 or at [garrett.peck@arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:garrett.peck@arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org).

**Open Mic Comedy.** Wednesdays 8-10 p.m. at Ri Ra Irish Pub, 2915 Wilson Blvd. Doors open at 7 p.m. Age 21 and up only. Free show, \$25 cash prize for best joke. Call 703-248-9888 or Visit [www.RiRa.com/](http://www.RiRa.com/) Arlington for more.

**Invasive Plants Removal.** Work parties are held every month to keep the parks free of destructive invasive plants. Teens, adults and families welcome. Every second Sunday of the month 2-4:30 p.m. at Gulf Branch Nature Center, 3608 Military Road; call 703-228-3403. Every third Sunday of the month 2-5 p.m. at Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Road; call 703-228-6535 or Visit [registration.arlingtonva.us](http://registration.arlingtonva.us). Free, no registration required.

**Karaoke.** 8 p.m. on the first Sunday every month at Galaxy Hut, 2711 Wilson Blvd. Visit [www.galaxyhut.com](http://www.galaxyhut.com) or call 703-525-8646.

**Pub Quiz.** 8 p.m. every Sunday at Whitlow’s on Wilson, 2854 Wilson Blvd. Prizes for first place. Free. Visit [www.whitlows.com](http://www.whitlows.com) or call 703-276-9693.

**Storytime.** Wednesdays and Fridays, 10:30-11 a.m. at Kinder Haus Toys, 1220 N. Fillmore St. Storytime with Ms. Laura. Call 703-527-5929.

**Lego Club.** Monthly on the first Wednesday. 4-5 p.m. Glencarlyn Branch Library, 300 S. Kensington St. The library provides tubs of legos and a special challenge and after the program the creations are displayed for everyone to see. No registration required. Call 703-228-6548 for more.

**Crystal City Sparket.** 11 a.m.-2 p.m. on Wednesdays at 1900 Crystal Drive. Sparket — A Creative Market is an extension of DC’s Eastern Market with arts, crafts, and handmade goods. Free to attend. Visit [www.crystalcity.org](http://www.crystalcity.org).

**Art for Life.** Third Thursday of each month. The Hyatt Regency Crystal City’s “Art for Life” Partnership with National Kidney Foundation brings a new artist each month to The Hyatt for a reception. Free. Visit [www.torpedofactory.org](http://www.torpedofactory.org).

**Brunch at Freddie’s.** Third Saturday of every month, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at Freddie’s Beach Bar, 555 23rd St. The Arlington Gay and Lesbian Alliance gathers for an all-you-can-eat breakfast buffet (\$9.99). All are welcome. No reservation is required. Visit [www.facebook.com/events/700174390103305](http://www.facebook.com/events/700174390103305).

### THURSDAY/DEC. 21

**Solstice Eve Hike and Campfire.** 6-7:30 p.m. at Gulf Branch Nature Center, 3608 N. Military Road. Celebrate the longest night of the year with candle making and roasting marshmallows for s’mores. Then take a night hike under the crescent moon. \$5. Call 703-228-3403, or email [gulfbranchnaturectr@arlingtonva.us](mailto:gulfbranchnaturectr@arlingtonva.us) for more.

### SUNDAY/DEC. 24

**Sunday Brunch Yoga.** 9 a.m. at the Crystal City Sports Pub, 529 23rd St S. \$10 for yoga and a drink. Visit [www.eatyogadrink.com](http://www.eatyogadrink.com) for more.

### TUESDAY/DEC. 26

**Yoga on Tap.** 6:30 p.m. at Lost Dog Cafe S., 2920 Columbia Pike. \$20 for yoga and a drink and food. Visit [www.eatyogadrink.com](http://www.eatyogadrink.com) for more.

### SATURDAY/DEC. 30

**Winter Bird Walk.** 10-11:30 a.m. at Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Road. What birds are around in the winter? Some are familiar, year-round friends but others are winter-only visitors such as Winter Wrens and Brown Creepers. Beginners welcome and loaner binoculars are available. Free. Ages 6 and up. Call 703-228-6535, or email [longbranchnaturectr@arlingtonva.us](mailto:longbranchnaturectr@arlingtonva.us) for more.

### SUNDAY/DEC. 31

**Sunday Brunch Yoga.** 9:00 a.m. at the Crystal City Sports Pub, 529 23rd St S. \$10 for yoga and a drink. Visit [www.eatyogadrink.com](http://www.eatyogadrink.com) for more.

**New Year’s Eve Stroll and Campfire.** 6-7:30 p.m. at Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Road. Explore the park as the full moon rises, then ring out the old and bring in the new by tossing resolutions into a wishing campfire. Bring a flashlight. \$7. Ages 5 and up. Call 703-228-6535, or email [longbranchnaturectr@arlingtonva.us](mailto:longbranchnaturectr@arlingtonva.us) for more.

### TUESDAY/JAN. 2

**Yoga on Tap.** 6:30 p.m. at Lost Dog Cafe S., 2920 Columbia Pike. \$20 for yoga and a drink and food. Visit [www.eatyogadrink.com](http://www.eatyogadrink.com) for more.

### SATURDAY/JAN. 6

**Arlington Community Chorus**

**Concert.** 7 p.m. in the Kenmore Middle School Black Box Theatre, 200 S. Carlin Springs Road. Directed by Mary-Hannah Klontz and accompanied by Diane Carsten-Pelak, with additional instrumentalists, the group will perform Will Todd’s “Jazz Missa Brevis” and choral classics with a twist, including “12 Days of Christmas.” Free. Visit [www.apsva.us/adulted](http://www.apsva.us/adulted) or call 703-228-7200 for more.

### SATURDAY/JAN. 13

**The Big Meow.** 3-4 p.m. at Theatre on the Run, 3700 S. Four Mile Run Drive. The story of an ever-hopeful fluff ball who desperately wants to belong to the band of neighborhood cats. \$15 adults/\$10 children under age 10. Visit [www.janefranklin.com/](http://www.janefranklin.com/) for more.

**Forty+ or Minus.** 7:30-9 p.m. Saturday, 2-5 p.m. at Theatre on the Run, 3700 S. Four Mile Run Drive. A multi-generational dance performance. \$5-\$22. Visit [www.janefranklin.com](http://www.janefranklin.com) for more.

### SATURDAY/JAN. 20

**Forty+ or Minus.** 7:30-9 p.m. Saturday, 2-5 p.m. at Theatre on the Run, 3700 S. Four Mile Run Drive. A multi-generational dance performance. \$5-\$22. Visit [www.janefranklin.com](http://www.janefranklin.com) for more.

### JAN. 20-27

**Complete Dogness on Stage.** Various times at Theatre on the Run, 3700 S. Four Mile Run Drive. Jane Franklin Dance presents a show about the antics of a little dog. \$15 Adults/\$10 Children under age 10. Email [janefranklindance@gmail.com](mailto:janefranklindance@gmail.com) for more.

### SATURDAY/JAN. 27

**Forty+ or Minus.** 7:30-9 p.m. Saturday, 2-5 p.m. at Theatre on the Run, 3700 S. Four Mile Run Drive. A multi-generational dance performance. \$5-\$22. Visit [www.janefranklin.com](http://www.janefranklin.com) for more.





PHOTOS BY EDEN BROWN/THE CONNECTION

Yorktown Singers performed at Arlington House.

# Christmas at Arlington House

Mixing history and entertainment.

BY EDEN BROWN  
THE CONNECTION

“But you know the Christmas tree in the corner would never have been in this house in the 1850s,” said John Michel, dance master of the Victorian Dance Society. “It’s an anachronism, because Christmas trees were only popular in the U.S. after the Civil War, when Queen Victoria and Prince Albert had made decorating a tree at Christmas fashionable. Until then, Americans might put holly or fir branches in a basket in the house to decorate for the season.”

“It’s just like this hoop skirt I’m wearing,” said Roberta Jones. “Victorian fashion brought over from England.”

Michel and Jones, part of the Victorian Dance Society, each had a blue cockade festooning their jackets or dresses. The Virginia cockade, as it was known, was a symbol of Virginia pride before the state seceded from the Union. Many states had cockades to



**John Michel, dance master for the Arlington House Victorian Dance Society; Roberta Jones, narrator for the dances; and Vincent Carmody, volunteer cannoneer at Fort Washington and member of the Dance Society executive board; prepare to dance the afternoon away at Arlington House. Michel has been volunteering at Arlington House for six years.**

express their political views. The Virginia seal is in the middle of the blue silk rosette.

The group was having fun mastering the steps and looking dashing in their uniforms and hoops. Michel urged anyone interested in joining the dancing to see their facebook page, The Arlington House Victorian Dance Society, or to contact him directly at Arlington Victorian Dance@gmail.com.



**James Nicholson leading the singers out of the living room at Arlington House.**



**John Michel mastering the dance.**

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- Balls Ford Road widening from Groveton Road to Route 234 Business (Sudley Road) in Prince William
- I-66 median widening at Route 29 for WMATA in Fairfax
- Commuter parking garage at Fairfax Corner
- George Synder Trail in Fairfax City
- Widen Jermantown Road bridge to four lanes over I-66 in Fairfax
- Western bus maintenance facility in Prince William
- East Falls Church Metro Bus bay expansion in Arlington
- Monument Drive bridge pedestrian improvements in Fairfax
- Rt. 50/Waples Mill Road intersection improvements in Fairfax
- Construct Poplar Tree Road bridge to four lanes over Route 28 in Fairfax
- Lee Highway pedestrian improvements in Fairfax
- Nutley Street SW multi-use trail to Metro in Vienna

If you cannot attend the hearing, email comments to **meetingcomments@vdot.virginia.gov** and reference "I-66 Concession Projects" in the subject line, or mail them to Maria Sinner at VDOT's District Office, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030 through **Jan. 8, 2018.**

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# The Trade-Off

## Housing Conservation District approved despite concerns about lack of public communications.

BY VERNON MILES  
THE CONNECTION

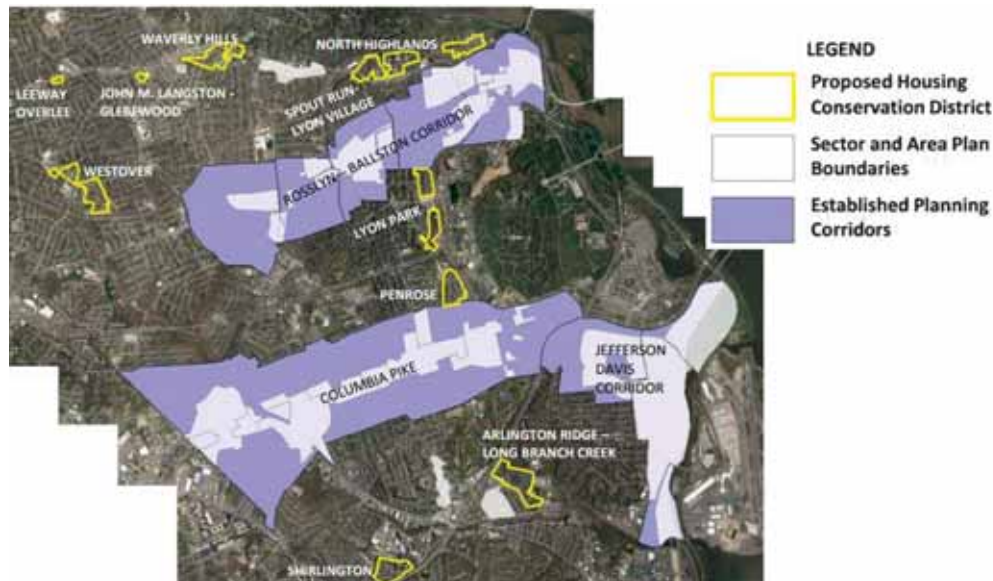
**M**arket-rate affordable housing is dying in Arlington. Since 2000, 14,400 units available to those at 60 percent of the area median income have disappeared. Most of those losses were caused by rent increases, though some were replaced through redevelopment. In an effort to stem the tide of market-rate affordable housing losses, on Dec. 16 the County Board approved a Housing Conservation District to cover 12 areas with market-rate affordable housing. But this proposal, while met with public praise, also faced criticism even from its supporters for a public engagement process that left many Arlingtonians in the dark.

The immediate impact of the Housing Conservation District would be that townhouses within the boundaries that could previously be redeveloped by-right would now come under public review and require county approval.

According to county staff, the plans were still at a conceptual level before final recommendations for boundaries were made public at a Nov. 9 meeting. While some civic associations had been contacted, staff said there was no direct outreach to individual building owners. Many of those who attended the meeting said they'd only found out about the proposal from local media outlets.

"I care deeply about these issues and try to keep up with them," said Stefanie Pryor, an Arlington resident. "This is being shoved through without education, without public view and details."

"Until Thursday, we had no idea what was



going on," said Scott Miller, a resident of the Courthouse neighborhood. "I don't know what's going on. I got no notice, no email, no robocall. I get better notice if I don't cut my grass. I would urge you to vote to delay. I don't know if this is good for me or bad for me. I don't know what the implications are. I don't know what the future of my home looks like."

Even among those speaking in support of the Housing Conservation District there were concerns about the public engagement. Nancy Iacomini, speaking for the Planning Commission, said that the plan was approved there with some reluctance and one motion by the commission's chair to defer.

"Many commissioners expressed unease; great unease," said Iacomini. "Each process has its own character. All have public engagement. Here, though ongoing, [the pub-

lic engagement] has seemingly not been as thorough as other processes."

Michelle Winters from the Alliance for Housing Solutions spoke in support of the district, but like Iacomini, had misgivings. Winters called the district one of the most significant and productive moves towards fulfilling the goals of the Affordable Housing Master Plan. Despite sharing unease about the public process, Winters also warned that if the district weren't approved that day, owners of townhomes that would fall under the redevelopment restrictions would be incentivized to demolish and redevelop the townhomes while they could pending the Housing Conservation District approval.

"I'm very concerned about the lack of community input in creating these borders," said Winters. "In an ideal situation, carrots and sticks are considered simultaneously.

If not approved, we may see an acceleration in demolitions in an effort to precede approval."

Following the concerns about public engagement expressed by local citizens, County Board member John Vihstadt put forward a motion to defer the vote.

"No outreach was done to building owners, who are the very stakeholders and critical component, whose cooperation and buy-in we need to fulfill this process," said Vihstadt. "People have said there's an opportunity cost to waiting, but I think there's also an opportunity cost to short-circuiting our community process."

But between losing public faith in the county's community engagement and the prospect of losing more market-rate affordable housing to redevelopment, other County Board members said there was no choice. Vihstadt's deferral motion was voted down by the rest of the board.

"Functionally, what [delay] would achieve is the displacement of people areas that we desire to be multi-family while changing the use," said County Board Member Christian Dorsey. "That's something that I cannot accept."

If I have to consider the trade-off of a use being permitted no longer by right but by exception versus continuing, or perhaps accelerating, the market incentive to get people evicted from their homes to create a function incompatible with our other plans and visions, that's the decision I'm going to have to make. That's the tradeoff that I see. I think this is one where, left with no perfect option, this is the best one available to us."

The Housing Conservation District was approved four to one, with Vihstadt opposing.

# Drawing Boundaries

## Middle school boundaries reignite busing questions.

BY VERNON MILES  
THE CONNECTION

**T**he newly approved middle school boundaries were passed unanimously at the Dec. 14 School Board meeting, but revealed deep and recurring divisions on the board when it comes to redistricting.

Throughout the community feedback to the proposed boundaries, one of the repeated concerns has been the lack of diversity and unevenly distributed student populations in the new redistricting plan. Williamsburg Middle School, 79 percent white, will be under capacity in 2022, while other schools will be at capacities up to 111 percent. During the discussions about the new boundaries, County Board member Reid Goldstein noted that he had tried to put together a motion to spread the student overpopulation and diversity more evenly across the schools but that it had not gotten support from fellow School Board members.

"I don't like Williamsburg set at 89 per-

cent of capacity and resulting demographics there," said Goldstein. "I understand the attachment to walkability, connection with peer cohorts, and neighborhood cohesion. All the same issues I had as a parent, and every parent does, I get it. However, I can't build a boundary plan based on what works well for each student or family, have to take top-down approach."

Goldstein expressed concerns that the new boundaries would deepen divisions in Arlington Public Schools.

"I fear the dangerous precedent being set today, one that has real implications for community equity and instructional quality," said Goldstein. "Geographic placement and demographics of schools mitigate against evenly distributed boundary system ... if we leave Williamsburg that far under capacity, in every future change will have to contend with neighborhoods and school communities saying 'leave us under capacity.'"

But other School Board members said Goldstein's plans to shift populations could hinder students.

"We are pursuing the best decision that makes sense now and allowing ourselves flexibility to make additional adjustments and refinements moving forward," said School Board member James Lander. "Busing children out of their community isn't advantageous to academic excellence. Students tend to do better in environments where they feel safe and supported. We want that for all our schools, but that isn't always on the other side of town."

School Board member Tannia Talento said that she philosophically disagreed with

### "FLOURISHING AFTER 55"

"Flourishing After 55" from Arlington Office of Senior Adult Programs for Dec. 27-30.

Senior centers: Lee, 5722 Lee Hwy.; Langston-Brown Senior Center, 2121 N. Culpeper St.; Walter Reed, 2909 S. 16<sup>th</sup> St.; Arlington Mill, 909 S. Dinwiddie St.; Aurora Hills, 735 S. 18<sup>th</sup> St.

Senior trips: U.S. Dept. of State to tour Diplomatic Reception Rooms, D.C., Wednesday, Dec. 27, \$6; Renwick Gallery, D.C., "Parallax Gap" exhibit, Friday, Dec. 29, \$7. Call Arlington County 55+ Travel, 703-228-4748. Registration required.

Goldstein, and pointed to disadvantages that would hit families bused to other parts of the county to balance the demographics. Talento noted that public transportation was not as developed in the areas around Williamsburg Middle School, which could make it a challenge for low income parents to retrieve their children from school if required.

The County Board unanimously approved the new middle school boundaries, which will go into effect for the Fall 2019 school year.

### NEW PROGRAMS:

**New Year's vision boards**, Wednesday, Dec. 27, 6:30 p.m., Arlington Mill. Materials provided. Register, 703-228-7369.

**Senior ice skating**, Wednesday, Dec. 27, 7:40-8:40 a.m., Ballston Mall, \$1 (includes skates). Details, 703-228-4771.

**Tai Chi practice**, Wednesdays 12:30 p.m., Saturdays, 9:15 a.m., Langston-Brown. Details, 703-228-6300.

**Open watercolor studio**, Wednesday, Dec. 27, 10 a.m.-noon, Arlington Mill. Artists work at their own pace. Details, 703-228-7369.



# Finding Peace and Joy

Relieving stress and finding meaning in the holiday season.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

**W**hen artist Kathryn Coneway is feeling overwhelmed by the stress of the holiday season, she heads outside to find peace and calm in nature.

"I get easily overwhelmed by the crowded parking lots and busy stores," she said. "When I'm feeling overwhelmed, I'll go to Huntley Meadows Park and walk around. The beauty of nature restores me. You're with other people when you're there, but there's still solitude."

From those who are dashing to finish holiday shopping and those who are financially strapped to those grieving a loss or dreading dealing with strained familial relationships, the stretch of time between Thanksgiving and Christmas is often hectic and emotionally charged. Recharging and infusing the holidays with joy and peace might mean redefining the holiday season.

"Research shows increased happiness after thinking of three good things that happened to you today and what caused them," said Jerome Short, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology at George Mason University. "Also, people report improved mood from doing five kind acts in a day, expressing gratitude, pursuing important goals, and playing sports."

An evening of music and quiet creativity is one method that Elizabeth Rees, associate rector at Saint Aidan's Episcopal Church in Alexandria uses to recharge during the holiday season. The event called "Healing Arts" is held at the Center for Spiritual Deepening at St. Aidan's. "Sometimes for me, meditative art helps me to get into a different space," she said. "And with instrumental cello and guitar music in the background, it [is] beautiful."

**"Moments of quiet and rest and being able to be present in the moment help me to get through the frenzy."**

— Elizabeth Rees, Associate Rector, Saint Aidan's Episcopal Church

Visual imagery is another technique Rees employs. "I went to a... prayer-yoga-dance gathering this week, and [the instructor] had us physically pretend to pick up things that we want to let go of or that are weighing us down to place on an imaginary fire," she said. "I loved the imagery: my burdens and distractions going up in smoke along with my prayers rising to God to make space in me for something new."

Coneway uses the season's natural surrounding to inspire her art, which is another way in which she finds joy and relaxation. "The gift of this time of day is the display of light and colors of early morning and evening," she said. "I encourage families to gather around the table and [create] art together. Whether its parents addressing Christmas cards while children are drawing or making a collage out of wrapping paper or tissue paper, I encourage families to work on something together."

Serving others and expressing gratitude are research-driven techniques for finding happiness says Dr. Lois T. Stover, Ed.D., dean, School of Education and Human Services at Marymount University.

"Make holiday cards and send them out. It's fun to drop a word of kindness anonymously to someone in the neighborhood and then tell that person to pass along the idea, leaving words of kindness or gratitude themselves for someone else," she said. "Create an 'I am

thankful for...' wall and cover it with sticky notes that complete the sentence as new thoughts come to mind each time you pass by."

There's plenty of holiday joy that comes without a price tag, suggests Stover. "Drive through various neighborhoods just after dark and exclaim 'Oooh - aah' over homes or other buildings that have particularly fun



**Artist Kathryn Coneway and her family spend time in Huntley Meadows Park when they're feeling overwhelmed by the holiday rush.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF KATHRYN CONEWAY



**Richard Sylvain, Pat Keithly and Eileen Myers attended a "Healing Arts" event at the Center for Spiritual Deepening at St. Aidan's Episcopal Church in Alexandria. Such activities can bring peace and joy during a hectic holiday season.**

or beautiful displays of lights," said Stover. "Listen to holiday music in a variety of genres and make play lists of favorites. Sing along loudly. It's hard to feel down while belting out anything from 'Frosty the Snowman' to 'Joy to the World.'"

For those looking to maintain the religious meaning of the season, Rees suggests daily devotions sent electronically. "I've found

some wonderful daily prayers that arrive each day by email. Just a minute or two of focus on what is deep and joyful and holy help center me for the day," she said. "For me, Ignatian prayer has been speaking to me lately, imagining myself into the stories of scripture. Moments of quiet and rest and being able to be present in the moment help me to get through the frenzy."

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**PEOPLE**

# Creative Approach to Gift-Giving

FROM PAGE 5

cel document so that I don't overspend or buy too many things for one person. Finally, I online shop a lot. I don't think a day goes by without at least one package arriving at my doorstep, so I use Ebates to get cash back and Honey to automatically find coupons." In terms of what to get with her economically savvy approaches, she looks in the exact places she knows her loved ones won't.

"The gifts I like to give are usually things I know people wouldn't buy for themselves — not necessarily useful, but always fun," Jackson said. "I like to search Etsy for things I know my friends and family like, and then get them something unexpected — like matching 'Bah Humpug' shirts for my sister and brother-in-law, who are obsessed with their pug, Lois. My goal when giving gifts is to make sure the recipient will know it was from me whenever they use it — that's why I got my best friend a picture of my face turned into a pillow."

Retail expert and Arlingtonian Amanda Adams agreed that it's ideal to make a gift personal.

"The best gifts are thoughtful quirky and speak to someone's personality," said Adams, who has been in retail management for years. "Any sort of one size fits all gift is ideal; for example, accessories. 'I love getting gifts that I can use for my house or something that I would not normally spend money on, like Lush soaps, Anthropologie candles, scarves, hats, and gloves.'"

Arlington residents like Alyssa Belmondo do see the beauty in giving and receiving more practical holiday presents — especially for her 20-something

peers whose incomes aren't exactly disposable.

"I like getting and giving gifts that are useful as opposed to something that my friends and family might not need, especially because at my age, everyone seems to be on a budget," Belmondo said. "Even though gift cards seem lazy, I love getting them for my friends because they can actually be thoughtful. For example, I have some friends who really like to get their nails done, or do yoga and cycling classes, so I like to get them gift cards for manicures, pedicures and classes."

Although Belmondo errs on the side of more functional, her philosophy is to also in that she buys what she knows her giftees tend to simply browse.

"I like getting her things I know she doesn't spend her own money on," Belmondo said. "She loves reading but hates spending money on book so I like to get her gift cards to buy them."

When in doubt, keep it simple — even for children.

"If you're like me, most of the kids you know already have tons of toys," Jackson said. "Books are always a good gift, but try to think outside of the typical toy box — yes, pun intended — kids will go crazy over simple things like a slinky, a koosh ball, an echo microphone; things that you wouldn't necessarily think are as 'fun' as life-size dinosaurs or whatever crazy toys are on the market today. Also, kids are usually obsessed with at least one thing — for our family, it's trucks, Peppa Pig, and sports balls, respectively — so just google that and see what you can find. Pro tip: anything you were going to buy for your niece anyway — boots, an easel, a sleeping bag, a bathing suit — all come in Peppa Pig versions."

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SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION

**OAR Board Member Dr. Alfred Taylor, Jr. talks with OAR Executive Director Elizabeth Jones Valderrama about his belief in second chances and the importance of OAR in the transition back into the community.**

## Angels

FROM PAGE 4

incarcerated parent. This way each child will receive a gift with a personalized note from the absent parent. Along the walls of the large room at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church are tables full of toys arranged by age level. Eight-year-old Kevin Dolenc is there with his mother. He says he is wrapping presents for other children who have parents in jail. Kevin heads for the 4-5 year old table and picks up a box of five Hot Wheels cars. "This is what I donated."

Valderrama says there are a number of people who make it a family tradition to come every year. "We have people who have been participating for 20 years." She says the volunteer list completely filled up in 15 days. After all of the presents are wrapped about 40 volunteers will deliver them to the children's homes by Dec. 21-22 to be sure they arrive in time for Christmas.

While the tables are full of trucks, books, games and sports equipment, Jones says they particularly ask for gift cards for teens. "People like to bring stuffed animals and toys, but we have a lot of teens." She said the children this year range from a two-month-old to an 18-year-old.

There are a number of needs in the community and according to Anne Breville, Volunteer and Special Projects associate, "we all work together." Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) had dropped off some toys for the OAR wrapping event, and OAR provides gifts for children at the annual sheriff's party if the incarcerated parent has participated in parenting classes. "It's a big incentive because this is the only time all year when the prisoner can touch and hug instead of visiting children behind glass."

Sheila Berry, an OAR board member says, "I'm on the board because I live and work in Arlington and care very much about my neighbors living a comfortable life."

Dr. Alfred Taylor, Jr. has been a member of the OAR Board for five years. He says, "I have always had a personal belief in second chances." He points out how difficult it is when a person is released from prison and their family has probably abandoned them, they don't have any money and don't remember how to make decisions. "They just fall back into what is familiar — their former life." OAR steps in and bridges the gap to help reintegrate them into the community.

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## "Suit Yourself, Biscuit"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Talk about a superfluous statement. I was asleep in bed and awoke to find one of our five cats, Biscuit, the oldest at 11+, lying sphinx-like on the front right of our bed. Though it was dark, I could see in his yellow eyes that he was awake.

Wanting to feel a cat against my body, I said, "Biscuit, come here. Come lie against my chest." No response so I repeated the request. This time with a bit more conviction: "Biscuit, come here. I want to feel you next to me." Again, no response. In fact, no reaction whatsoever. So I muttered, without thinking even: "OKAY, Biscuit, suit yourself."

And then I laughed. Of course he's going to suit himself. That's what cats do. I should be grateful he didn't jump off the bed. After all, he was minding his own business.

And that business is the entire philosophy of the feline species captured in two words. If any of you has ever owned a cat and been sensitive to and appreciative of their differences with the canine population, cats don't really come when you call them. Nor do they respond to a million other things you ask of them. If you understand and embrace that behavior, you'll likely begin to see this non-responsiveness as part of their charm.

However, when they do come when you call them, or when they climb uninvited onto your chest while lying in bed or snuggle with you on the couch; oh, how special you feel. And if you don't feel put upon or tolerated and can instead savor the uniqueness of their knead (and do everything you can to encourage its repetition), then you can indeed find pleasure and purpose in that moment, rare though it may be — or maybe not.

Accepting the parameters of the relationship with your cat, and managing your expectations, will go a long way toward understanding what your cat is able to give you. And what cats can give you is companionship and love — on their terms of course. The mere fact that Biscuit is lying on the bed should be enough to make me happy. Expecting that he would rise due to my beck and call, at night, especially while he's cat-napping is unreasonable on my part. Biscuit is not being difficult in the least. He is simply adhering to a non-responsive-type behavior that generations of cats — and generations of cat owners, should be accustomed to, not questioned or even curious about.

As an extraordinarily experienced cat owner (almost 40 years), I should have known better. Yet I couldn't resist the temptation/control the urge to give Biscuit (a cat) the chance to change the course of presumptive cat history and come to me when I asked. The problem is, once in a blue moon — or was that a red moon (it certainly appeared to be above the fold on the front page of The Washington Post the other day), cats will break with historical convention and respond/react/reply in kind with both word and deed. They'll come, they'll snuggle, they'll talk, they'll nuzzle, they might even lick. In fact, they'll do everything they can to endear themselves to you.

But it doesn't happen often or rather it doesn't happen consistently. Yet it remains the goal of every committed (or rather should be) cat owner to make every attempt to induce their cats to succumb to their cat-seducing charms. Like right now, Twinkle, our white, five-and-half-years-old domestic medium hair, is doing everything she can to get my attention. She's walking back and forth across my note pad (as I'm trying to write; I'm busy), she's rubbing her head against my face and using the top of my pen as some sort of head scratcher, she's lying on her left side with as many as four paws outstretched across my left arm as I use it to block her advance and she's talking non-stop.

She's being such a pain, but you have to love them. If you can't appreciate their untimely intrusions and instead expect some kind of predictable dog-like obedience, you need more than "The Cat Whisperer," you need "The Cat Screamer," because it's NOT HAPPENING.

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



12

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