



Oak Hill Herndon CONNECTION

Dan Demers of 1009 Monroe St. accepts his award sign as one of the winners of the "Dress Up Herndon for the Holidays" decoration contest. Demers and family won the award for their dazzling "Fairytale Christmas," display.

'Tis the Season for the 'Dress Up Herndon' Contest

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DECEMBER 20-26, 2017

ONLINE AT WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

COMMENTARY

A Year in Review: Change and Collaboration in County, Hunter Mill

BY SUPERVISOR CATHY HUDGINS
(D-HUNTER MILL)

Change and collaboration have been the themes for 2017 in Fairfax County and the Hunter Mill District.

This year, two of the most important accomplishments of the Board of Supervisors are the establishment of the Police Civilian Review Panel and the Independent Police Auditor. Like many large jurisdictions, the relationship of the police and our citizens is of great importance. The creation of the panel and the auditor aim to build the trust with citizens and the police necessary to keep our communities and residents safe.

Countywide, we welcome the changeover in leadership in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) with the installation of Superintendent Scott Brabrand, and the appointment of new County Executive Bryan Hill who will take the reins in the County in January. Their predecessors initiated changes in how we do business both at the Board levels and in our



Superintendent Scott Brabrand and Huntermill District Supervisor Catherine Hudgins.

programs and services. This collaboration between schools and county continues to evolve with an aim to greater efficiencies and better service delivery to our citizens. Already we have seen the benefits in our work on the FY2019 budget proposal.

One example of the county/schools collaboration is work of the Successful Children and Youth Policy Team (SCYPT). Composed of Board members, agency staff and community advocates, the

SCYPT team has a focus on how we can bring together the resources of the County, FCPS, and community organizations to help our children become successful individuals. This year, SCYPT developed their Equitable School Readiness Strategic Plan to expand early children development and learning programs so more children begin their education ready for learning. Investments in pre-K pay off "bigly."

In the Hunter Mill District, we're

sprouting like long, planned for spring flowers. New development, residential and commercial, debuted in the Tysons area and in Reston.

❖ The Aperture apartments, BLVD Reston Station and other new buildings opened their doors, bringing new residents and businesses.

❖ Senior residents who want to stay in their community will have new options with the coming of the Hunters Woods at Trails Edge Senior Living Community in Reston.

❖ The Reston Transportation Service District was established this year to provide needed revenue for new roads, improvements to existing roads, intersection improvements and grid of streets to around the transit stations.

❖ In Reston, the community continues to tussle with the proposed zoning amendment to the Reston PRC to raise the density. While a decision is not forthcoming in 2017, it has been exciting to see so many residents becoming engaged in this issue by attending meetings, writing letters, and offering their input.

On the fun side in Hunter Mill:

❖ James Madison High school sports had a banner year as teams won state championships in Girls Swim and Dive, Cross Country, and Softball.

❖ McNair Elementary School Chess Team outmaneuvered their opponents at Virginia Scholastic Chess Championships in both team and individual competitions, coming home with multiple championship trophies.

❖ Vienna Chorale celebrated their 30th anniversary of sharing their beautiful music with the community.

❖ New public art sculptures were unveiled at the Aperture, and at the newly renovated Vienna Community Center, both welcome additions to our artscape. And, Reston Public Art celebrated their 10th anniversary.

❖ The NoVi Trail Network neared completion, providing walkable connections to local amenities such as parks, schools, Tysons and the Town of Vienna.

As you can see, 2017 was very busy! I look forward to being as equally engaged in 2018. A Happy Hunter Mill Holiday to you!



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'Tis the Season for the "Dress Up Herndon" contest

Herndon ablaze with outdoor light displays; contest winners named.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Outdoor holiday lights have come a long way since Thomas Edison introduced the first ones as a Christmas display in 1880. In cities and towns lights twinkle and spread cheer across America during the Christmas season.

Adding a decorating contest kicks the fun up a notch. With that in mind, the Town of Herndon held their annual "Dress Up Herndon for the Holidays" contest on Monday, Dec. 11, 6-8 p.m.

With the help of a list of citizen-nominated addresses, members of the Town's Cultivating Community Initiative and their guests piled into a town van and took to the streets. They checked out all the nominated entries as well as other homes they spied as the merry group transversed Herndon's 4.2 square miles of neighborhoods. From mini-lights with built-in twinklers to different incandescent light sizes and inflatables, the displays brought out a competitive spirit in many citizens vying for an award. The great Christmas light fight



Guest Bill McKenna, Herndon Town Councilmember, Cindy Roeder, Herndon Parks and Recreation Director, Barbara Glakas, Cultivating Community Initiative Member (CCI), Guest Lorna Schmid, and Diane Stanley, CCI Member prepare to judge and name winners in Herndon's annual decoration contest, "Dress Up Herndon for the Holidays."

PHOTO BY
MERCIA HOBSON/
THE CONNECTION

in the Town of Herndon was on.

During the judges' jolly ride through the night, they assessed the entries consider-

ing – among other factors – creativity, overall design, originality, and of course, the brightness of the displays.

Winners

- ❖ 1009 Monroe St. – "Fairytale Christmas," dancing lights throughout the yard.
- ❖ 1003 Van Buren St. – "The Big Dragon," a large holiday dragon looking over a yard of lights and candy canes.
- ❖ 1371 Dominion Ridge Lane – "Lollipop Lane," cascade of lights, stars, and lollipops.
- ❖ 721 Old Hunt Way – "Midnight Blue," a collage of silent night, midnight blue lights.
- ❖ 1101 Bicksler Drive – "White Lights," a burst of classic white lights.
- ❖ 618 Merlins Lane – "Kid's Delight," Christmas is covered here with Santa, nativity, nature, candy canes and reindeer.
- ❖ 1407 Winterland Court – "Old Fashion Christmas," Santa, polar bears and trains surrounded by white lights.
- ❖ 1327 Summerfield Drive – "Christmas Village," a yard full of jolly fun with characters of all sorts.

Honorable Mentions

697 Old Hunt Way, 1505 Snowflake Court, 762 Grace St., 1001 Pembroke St., 1106 Waterford Place, 1355 & 1351 Icy Brook Drive, 1302 Summerfield Drive, 1508 Summerset Place, 117 Anthem Drive, and 1501 Snowflake Court.

Three hours later, a bit cold but filled with good cheer, the committee had awarded eight holiday signs, Publisher's Clearing House style. A sneak up to the front door, a quick knock, and when the door opened: "Surprise! You've won!"

The town's website recommends citizens, "Pile the kids, dog, and neighbors into the sleigh and check out this year's 'Dress Up Herndon for the Holidays' contest winners!"

Selfless Giving Knows No Bounds in Herndon

Lives changed; joy received; veterans remembered.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Citizens and organizations in the Town of Herndon came out full force the weekend before Christmas 2017. On Friday, Dec. 15 and Saturday, Dec. 16 they supported three local service-giving events, new shoes for children in need at Hutchison Elementary School, refurbished bikes for children without at Herndon Middle School, and wreath-laying for Wreaths Across America Day at Chestnut Grove Cemetery in Herndon.

Lives Changed

Shoes are one of the most visible signs of poverty. For children in need, having access to new, well-fitting shoes can change their lives and remove the financial burden from their families as they struggle to make ends meet.

No longer distracted by the discomfort of shoes that are too small or worn out, new shoes can increase a child's self-es-



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

From left: Sarah Aiello, assistant principal, Hutchison; Hollie Daniel, school counselor, Hutchison; Del. Jennifer Boysko (D-81); Supervisor John W. Foust (D-Dranesville); Anna Schoenfeld and Jason DiMambro, co-executive directors, Arts Herndon; Katie Aldridge, assistant principal Hutchison; and Renee Gorman, school counselor, Hutchison; gather at the tables full of shoes and gift card donations collected for needy children at Hutchison Elementary School in Herndon.

teem and physical activity, making a difference in the life of a child.

Knowing this, Supervisor John W. Foust (D-Dranesville) and Arts Herndon, a local nonprofit organization, teamed up. After collecting new shoes and gift cards to benefit children in need at Hutchison Elementary School in Herndon, they gathered with Del. Jennifer B. Boysko (D-86), and some of the staff and students at the Title 1 school on Friday morning, Dec. 15.

Foust and Co-Executive Directors of Arts Herndon, Jason DiMambro and Anna Schoenfeld carried in boxes of new donated shoes and a large manila envelope filled with gift cards. "These donations help ensure students have what they need to be successful in school," said Foust. DiMambro expressed admiration for the selfless spirit of local citizens. "It's very heartwarming to be in a community where everyone is so giving to these children," he said.

For Boysko, the event has become a yearly tradition. "It's something I look forward to every year," she said.

School staff plans to set the shoes and

SEE GIVING, PAGE 6

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.

The 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.

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@connectionnewspapers.com.

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placed on local deductions. It is really time to bite the bullet and focus on spending.

Dudley Losselyong
Great Falls

The Other Side of Gun Ownership

To the Editor:

Reporting part of the story (Letters, “Armed as for a war zone,” Connection, Dec. 13) can be more

misleading than reporting none. Here's what some don't want you to know: If you're not involved with drugs or gangs, the probability that you'll be the victim of violent crime in the U.S. drops to the same levels as those in Western European nations with the most restrictive gun regulations in the world. Attributing differences in homicide rates to gun ownership rates, without a hint of empirical support, is deceptive and irresponsible.

Also, overall homicide rates in

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Taking Exception on Tax Reform

To the Editor:

(Regarding ‘Federal Tax Reform. Bad for Fairfax,’ Connection, Dec. 13, 2017)

Interesting article! However, I must take exception with the conclusion as presented by our local representatives. Capping the state and local write-offs will help to ensure that the local property taxes will slow their continued in-

creases above a reasonable deduction against your federal income tax.

Maybe, just maybe once the local deductions are capped at 10K our local elected officials will stop or slow their tax and spend policies. Once the tax paying property owners find that their outrageous property taxes are not deductible they just might start questioning the out of control spending by our local Fairfax county representatives and maybe think of electing different representatives.

One can only hope that this tax bill passes and a capped of 10K is

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Oak Hill & Herndon
CONNECTION

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ENTERTAINMENT

Submit entertainment announcements at www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/. The deadline is noon on Friday.

ONGOING

Gingerbread Village. Through Jan. 4, various times at the Hyatt Regency Reston, Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St. See the annual display in the hotel lobby. Call 703-709-1234 or visit reston.hyatt.com.

All-comers' Group Fun Run at Potomac River Running. Tuesdays and Thursdays. Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St., Reston. For beginners or competitive runners, come out for a fun, low-key run that is safe and social. Call 703-689-0999 potomacriverrunning.com.

Art Exhibit through Jan. 8 at Artsights, Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St. "Drag, Disney, Art Insights and Art Outsiders: The Art of Tennessee Loveless," see the new collection by Tennessee Loveless including his retrospective book 10x10x10 and images from his projects. Call 703-709-6720 or visit restontowncenter.com.

THROUGH FEB. 17

Artist Exhibit. Various times at the Greater Reston Arts Center, 11900 Market St. Featuring the work of Paulina Peavy, namesake of "Paulina Peavy: A Message to Paulina," the first exhibition to bring together a selection of Peavy's works across disciplines including works on paper, paintings, films, texts, and numerous mixed media masks. Visit www.restonarts.org.

THURSDAY/DEC. 21

Puppet Snow Show. 10 and 11:30

a.m. at Frying Pan Farm Park's Visitor Center, 2739 West Ox Road, Herndon. Puppet master Bob Brown brings this special holiday puppet show to the park. \$5. Call 703-437-9101 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov.

SATURDAY/DEC. 23

Catchin' Toads and Tim McKee in Concert. noon at the Promenade, 11900 Market St., Reston. 45-minute performances presented by Reston Community Center. Call 703-476-4500 or visit restoncommunitycenter.com.

Horse-drawn Carriage Rides. 4-9 p.m. at Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St. \$5 per person; children 5 and under ride free with adult. Proceeds go to local charities. Call 703-709-6720 or visit restontowncenter.com.

SUNDAY/DEC. 31

New Year's Eve Golf Tournament. 10 a.m. at Herndon Centennial Golf Course, 909 Ferndale Ave. Annual four-person scramble. Entry fee includes green fee, cart fee, range balls and prizes. Call 703-471-5769 visit www.herndongolf.com.

MONDAY/JAN. 1

New Year's Day 5K. 10 a.m. at Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St. music, food, awards, and fun celebration following the race. Presented by Potomac River Running. Call 703-709-6720 or visit restontowncenter.com.

DEADLINE JAN. 5, 2018

2018 Fine Art Photography Competition. Fine Art Photography

of any subject is welcome; there is no required theme for entries. Call 703-956-9560 or visit www.artspaceherndon.com.

SUNDAY/JAN. 7

Book Store Anniversary. 1-4 p.m. at Reston Used Books, 1623 Washington Plaza N. Open house to celebrate 40 years of being in business. Call 703-435-9772.

MONDAY/JAN. 8

Yoga Storytime with Little Twisters. 10:30 a.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive. Read a classic children's book, then act it out using yoga moves and poses. Cosponsored by the Friends of Reston Library. Age 3-5 with adult. Call 703-689-2700.

TUESDAY/JAN. 9

Baby Lapsit. 7 p.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive. Enjoy nursery rhymes and songs while building early literacy skills for the child. Birth-11 months with adult. Call 703-689-2700.

THURSDAY/JAN. 11

Yoga at the Library. 7 p.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive. Local yoga instructor Madhavi Rao will lead this yoga session. Water provided. Bring a mat. Sponsored by the Friends of the Reston Regional Library. Call 703-689-2700.

MONDAY/JAN. 15

Social Justice Advocate Speech. noon at at Reston Community Center, Hunters Woods, 2310 Colts



Live Music

Catchin' Toads will be in concert with Tim McKee on Saturday, Dec. 23 at noon at the Promenade, 11900 Market St., Reston. 45-minute performances presented by Reston Community Center. Call 703-476-4500 or visit restoncommunitycenter.com for more.

Neck Road, Reston. Tamika D. Mallory keynote address is at noon, followed by a community lunch. \$5 for Reston residents and employees, and \$10 for all others. Visit www.restoncommunitycenter.com or call 703-476-4500.

Towne Drive. Read a classic children's book, then act it out using yoga moves and poses. Cosponsored by the Friends of Reston Library. Age 3-5 with adult. Call 703-689-2700.

WEDNESDAY/JAN. 24

Red Cross Blood Drive. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive. Call 703-689-2700.

THURSDAY/JAN. 25

Dollars and Sense. 7 p.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive. Monthly group discussion focuses on business leaders and markets. The discussion will focus on "Boomerang: Travels in the New Third World" by Michael Lewis. Call 703-689-2700.

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News

Giving in Herndon

FROM PAGE 3

gift cards aside, and when a student requires shoes, there will be ready supply or gift card waiting to change a life.

Joy Received

For 10 needy children and teens named by Cornerstones' Herndon Neighborhood Resource Center, it wasn't Santa who brought them a bicycle for Christmas but instead members of Herndon Middle School (HMS) after-school Bike Shop Program.

Recipients ranged in age from 9 to 17. Each youth received a refurbished bicycle, evaluated and rebuilt by the seventh and eighth graders in the Bike Shop Program. Kids helping kids. Members of the local community donated all the bikes.

Paul McIntyre is the Service Manager at The Bike Lane in Reston. He oversees the Bike Shop Program at HMS with A.J. Fuller, the After School Program Specialist. In an interview, Fuller explained the positive impact a bicycle has on recipients. "When I was growing up, my bike was my primary transportation around the community. Bikes give youth access to more opportunities, and also helps them stay in shape."

Tony Vargas 12, of Herndon, was one of the recipients. Admiring his bicycle, Vargas exclaimed, "It's nice. I'm going to go to my friends' houses and bike with them. It's going to be fun."

McIntyre thanked the community for donating the bicycles and Kelley Westenhoff of Reston Bike Club for mentoring and supporting the program, as well as club members for donating the helmets and taking the time to help with the giveaway.

"And of course, the kids at Herndon Middle School in the Bike Shop program," said McIntyre. "Without them, this event would never happen."

Veterans Remembered

The Herndon Woman's Club joined Wreaths Across America (WAA) on Saturday, Dec. 16 to remember United States Veterans, honor those who served, and teach children the value of freedom through the organization's participation in an official WAA wreath-laying ceremony at Chestnut



Together, the Card family (from left) Lauren, 3, Jacob, 6, and parents Jason and Danielle place a Remembrance wreath on a grave of a Veteran during Wreaths Across America Day 2017 held at Chestnut Grove in Herndon.

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



Many citizens came out on National Wreaths Across America Day on Dec. 16 in the Town of Herndon to remember the town's U.S. veterans, honor those who serve, and teach their children the value of freedom.

Grove Cemetery, 831 Dranesville Road in Herndon.

Karen Worcester, executive director, Wreaths Across America said on the organization's website: "We are not here to 'decorate graves.' We're here to remember not their deaths, but their lives."

Herndon area parents and children, teens and seniors gathered at Chestnut Grove Cemetery shortly before noon on Saturday, Dec. 16 for the ceremony, themed by Wreaths Across America as:

"I'm An American. Yes, I Am!"

An estimated crowd of nearly 700 turned out at Chestnut Grove Cemetery for the ceremony and wreath laying. In her remarks to those assembled in the cemetery, Carol Wright, member of Herndon Woman's Club, encouraged participants to say the veteran's name aloud when placing the wreath at the grave and then take a moment to thank the veteran for their service, thereby keeping the memory of that veteran alive.

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BULLETIN

Submit civic/community announcements at ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before event.

ORNAMENT FUNDRAISER

White House Ornaments Sale. Through Dec. 15, 2017 White House Ornaments available for purchase from Assistance League of Northern Virginia for \$22 per ornament. Proceeds benefit the nonprofit's children's programs. Local delivery can be arranged. Visit www.northernvirginia.assistanceleague.org for more.

HOLIDAY SOBER-RIDE

Free Sober Rides. The annual Holiday SoberRider program will operate 8 p.m.-4 a.m. each night from Friday, Dec. 15, 2017-Monday, Jan. 1, 2018. area residents age 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may download Lyft to their phones, then enter the code in the app's "Promo" section to receive their no cost (up to \$15) safe transportation home. WRAP's weekly Holiday SoberRide promo codes will be posted at 2 p.m. on Dec. 15, Dec. 23 and Dec. 31 on www.SoberRide.com.

FRIDAY/DEC. 29

Blood Donations Needed. 9 a.m.-2 p.m. at Extended Stay America, 12190 Sunset Hills Road, Reston. The American Red Cross urges eligible donors to give more life by giving blood this December. In December, donations decline but the needs of patients remain steady. During the holiday season, set aside an hour to give the most important gift – give blood and give more life. All those who come to give blood or platelets Dec. 21, 2017, through Jan. 7, 2018, will receive a long-sleeved Red Cross T-shirt, while supplies last. Make an appointment to give blood by downloading the free Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting redcrossblood.org or calling 1-800- RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

TUESDAY/DEC. 26

Inova Blood Drive, noon-7 p.m., at Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St., Reston, beside the Pavilion. Schedule appointments at 1-866-256-6372 or inova.org/donateblood.

ONGOING

Herndon High School Library needs volunteers. Training available to help with re-shelving books, pulling books for teacher use, helping to check passes, or other special projects. To learn more, email hhs_library@fcps.edu.

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To learn more about RSVP, visit www.rsvpnova.org.

LETTERS

FROM PAGE 4

the U.S. are 12 times closer than the specific gun homicide rate given in Mr. Nelson's letter. In other words, British criminals substitute knives or clubs for guns to kill their victims — cold comfort there.

Housebreaking is far more common in Britain than in the U.S. Could this be due to the deterrent effect of widespread gun ownership? Surveys of violent felons reveal that they are far more fearful of facing an armed resident than the highly unlikely chance that a cop will appear during the crime.

Michael Crawford
Great Falls

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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.

Finding Peace and Joy

Relieving stress and finding meaning in the holiday season.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

When 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."

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."

"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



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