

Potomac ALMANAC

Gabriela Munson, Erica Ralston and Jackson Diaz, members of the Bullis Choir, sing at the third annual Captain Brian Matthew "Bubba" Bunting Memorial Dual Meet Wrestling Tournament on Saturday, Jan. 27.

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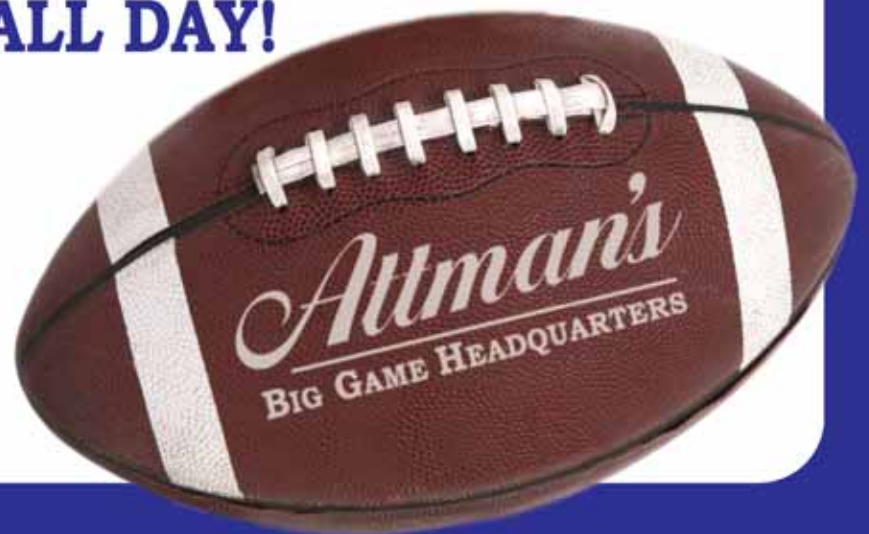
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A Tribute to Captain Brian Matthew 'Bubba' Bunting

Bullis hosts third annual wrestling tournament to honor alum.

BY PEGGY McEWAN
THE ALMANAC

Brian Bunting attended Bullis School in Potomac from sixth through 12th grade.

He competed on the school's football, lacrosse and wrestling teams. He was a state wrestling champion and president of his class.

After graduation in 1998, he attended the United States Military Academy, served in the U.S. Army, married and had a son.

On Feb. 24, 2009 Captain Bunting, known to family and friends as "Bubba," was killed by a roadside bomb while serving in Afghanistan, just months before his wife Nikki gave birth to their second son.

Last weekend Bullis School held the third annual Captain Brian Matthew "Bubba" Bunting Memorial Dual Meet Wrestling Tournament to honor Bubba and his family. Ten teams from schools throughout Maryland and D.C. participated in the day-long event.

"They are a beloved family, I felt like it was the right thing to do," said Bullis wrestling coach and tournament organizer Chris Brown.

The Bunting family has deep roots at the school, Brown said. Bubba's mother worked as secretary in the upper school and his father, Robert Bunting, Sr., was head of facilities.

"Five of my children graduated from Bullis," Robert Bunting said.

Nikki Bunting, too, graduated from Bullis though, she said, she and Bubba were not high school sweethearts.

Color Guard includes Corey Gonchar, Brandon and Collin Froelich, and Richard Wood.

PHOTO BY
DEBORAH STEVENS/
THE ALMANAC



They met when she was in sixth grade, she said, but were just friends. Years later, when he was home on military leave and she from college, they met again while out with mutual friends.

The rest was history, she said.

Nikki Bunting and her sons Connor, 10, and Cooper, 8, along with other family members were at the tournament Saturday, Jan. 27, for the opening ceremony which included the presentation of colors by members of the Magruder High School Junior ROTC, the National Anthem by Bullis Chamber Singers and "America the Beautiful" by the Magruder Choir.

Members of the Bullis Middle School wrestling team read a tribute to "Bubba"

Bunting and the school's Boy's Athletic Director Andres Parra, class of 1999, spoke of his memories of Bubba as a Bullis student.

"This is a great way to share [Bubba's] legacy," Nikki Bunting said. "He has quite a legacy at Bullis."

Steve Lilly, retired military and a referee at the tournament Saturday, said he did not know the tournament was in honor of a veteran until he arrived, but was moved by the sentiment, greeting family members and wishing them well.

"I'm honored that they are having this tournament," Lilly said.

Nikki Bunting said she feels the same. "We look forward to it every year," she said.



Nikki Bunting, left in purple sweater, and sons Connor, 10, and Cooper, 8, listen to Bullis School Boys Athletic Director and alumni Andres Parra, speak about Brian Bunting before the Captain Brian Matthew "Bubba" Bunting Memorial Dual Meet Wrestling Tournament at the school Saturday, Jan. 27.

PHOTOS BY PEGGY McEWAN/THE ALMANAC



Trophies from the Captain Brian Matthew "Bubba" Bunting wrestling tournament held at Bullis School on Saturday, Jan. 27.



The Bullis Choir performs at the third annual Captain Brian Matthew "Bubba" Bunting Memorial Dual Meet Wrestling Tournament on Saturday, Jan. 27.



Captain Brian Bunting's family: Kimmy and Oakley Tennessee; Captain Bunting's wife and two sons, Nikki, Cooper and Connor Bunting; and Captain Bunting's father, Robert, and, in back, Kayla and Stephanie Graver. Kimmy Tennessee and Stephanie Graver are Captain Bunting's sisters



This rufous-morph, Eastern Screech-owl was found and photographed in Great Falls National Park in January 2018.



Barred Owls, such as this, are regularly seen and heard in Great Falls Park, along the C&O Canal in Maryland, and in other local woodlands.

Winter Owls in our Midst

PHOTOS BY
DONALD M. SWEIG

BY DONALD M. SWEIG

It was a frigid 4 or 5 degrees in Great Falls National Park, Va., on the morning of Sunday, Jan. 7. Even so, a hearty and determined group of birders carried on with their usual Sunday morning bird walk. Part way into the walk, the leader, Kris Lansing, noticed something unusual about a knot hole in a large tree 40 or 50 feet away. She and another birder, looking carefully with their binoculars, realized it was an owl.

When spotted by the birders, the little (about 8.5 inches high), rufous-morph, Eastern Screech-owl (*Megascops asio*) was perched in the sun on the edge of the hollowed-out knothole that was its roosting retreat. Doubtless the owl was hoping that even the weak January sun would provide some warmth against the frigid morning cold. For the birders, it was a pleasant and delightful surprise, eagerly viewed with binoculars and spotting scopes, and recorded with cameras. Screech-owls are not unknown or unseen on the bird walk or in Great Falls Park, but they are a rare occurrence. At another point on that morning's walk, the birders found and observed a larger (about 21 inches tall), gray-brown, Barred Owl (*Strix varia*), a more frequent sighting in the park than the Screech-owl.

TO MOST BIRDERS, many ornithologists, not to mention the general public, owls are often a matter of great interest and often fascination.

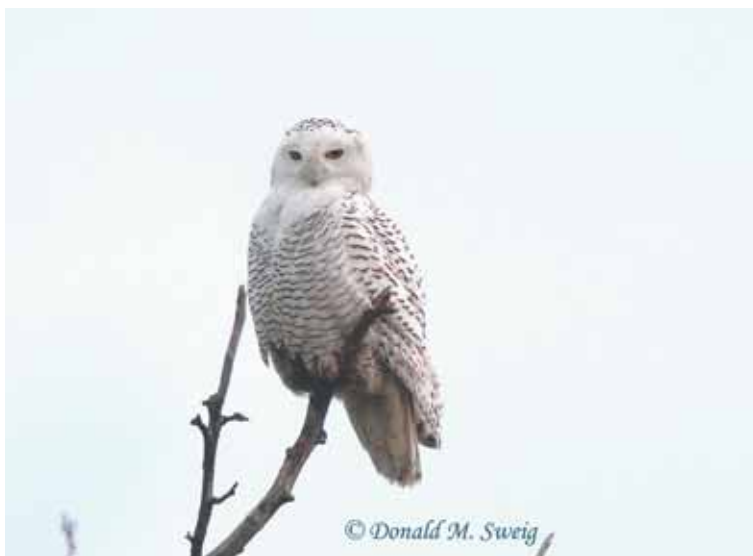
Four years ago, in January 2014, the appearance of at least two migrant Snowy Owls (*Bubo*

scandiacus), about 23 inches high, at National Airport, and two more in downtown Washington, generated great interest and discussion. Snowy owls migrate during the winter months as far south as the Washington area irregularly. But, Screech-Owls, Barred Owls, and the even larger Great Horned Owls, live and breed in local woodlands. They are permanent residents, even in the frigid winter.

Finding local owls can be, and usually is, both challenging and unpredictable. But when one is spotted it often becomes a subject of intense interest. For that reason, most birders and other responsible observers, refrain from posting on the internet or otherwise revealing the location of a roosting owl, for the owl's protection. The Screech-owl found on the Sunday bird walk was reported on E-bird and the Virginia birding listserv, with a notation that the location would remain undisclosed. Even so, birders and ordinary folks do find and see local owls, particularly in the winter when there are no leaves on the trees.

GREAT FALLS NATIONAL PARK, and environs, as well as along the C&O Canal in Maryland, are excellent places to look and listen for, and occasionally find owls. Similarly, they are sometimes located in wooded areas such as south of Alexandria, as well as in local parks and even residential yards. Local owls are often as ubiquitous as they seem elusive. They frequently roost or nest in hollows in large trees, often completely out of sight. It helps to have an experienced owl-finding companion or two when looking for the secretive birds.

The Sunday morning Great Falls bird walk is as good an opportu-



This Snowy Owl was seen and photographed near National Airport during an unusual irruption migration in the winter of 2014.



This pair of Eastern Screech-owls, presumably a mated pair, were roosting in the woodlands along the Potomac, south of Alexandria. (The rufous-morph is the female and the gray-morph is the male.)

nity as any to chance upon a local owl. The walk meets at 8 a.m. every Sunday in the first large parking lot at Great Falls National Park, Va. Everyone is always welcome on

the walk, although there is no guarantee of seeing an owl.

Donald Sweig is a local birder and nature photographer.

POTOMAC ALMANAC

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PUBLISHER

Mary Kimm
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com
@MaryKimm

EDITORIAL

PHONE: 703-778-9415

E-MAIL:

almanac@connectionnewspapers.com

EDITOR

Steven Mauren, 703-778-9415
smauren@connectionnewspapers.com

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Mike Salmon
msalmon@connectionnewspapers.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Susan Belford, Carole Dell, Cissy Finley Grant, Carole Funger, Colleen Healy, Kenny Lourie, Peggy McEwan, Ken Moore

Contributing Photographers

Harvey Levine, Deborah Stevens

Art/Design:

Laurence Foong, John Heinly, Ali Khaligh

Production Manager

Geovani Flores

ADVERTISING

For advertising information
sales@connectionnewspapers.com
703-778-9431

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES

Display Advertising:
Kenny Lourie 301-325-1398
klourie@connectionnewspapers.com

Debbie Funk

National Sales & real Estate
703-778-9444
debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

David Griffin

Marketing Assistant
703-778-9431
dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com

Jerry Vernon

Executive Vice President
703-549-0004
jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

CIRCULATION

circulation@connectionnewspapers.com

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NEWS

Health Alert Issued

County reports widespread flu.

Flu activity is now widespread throughout the region and county health officials are urging all residents to get vaccinated and practice prevention measures to avoid the spread of illness.

“The best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated,” said Dr. Travis Gayles, County Health Officer. “If you haven’t received a flu shot yet, there is still time to get one and help protect you and those around you.”

In addition, there are everyday actions that everyone can take to help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza (flu):

- ❖ Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- ❖ Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- ❖ Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.

- ❖ Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

- ❖ If sick with flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone except to get medical care. A fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.

Hospitals in Montgomery County are all experiencing increased flu activity and are implementing visitor restrictions to help protect the health of patients, staff and other visitors. Visitors at all six hospitals who exhibit flu-like symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose and muscle aches will not be allowed to enter the hospital. Children under the age of 12 will not be allowed in any area, except in urgent situations. In these cases, they may be asked to wear masks. If a visitor who must be at the facility exhibits flu symptoms, they will be asked to wear a mask. Hospitals will continue these precautions until flu activity slows down.

To find out where to get a flu shot, visit <https://vaccinefinder.org/>. For more information about the flu, visit www.cdc.gov/flu.

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ENTERTAINMENT



Pressenda Chamber Players, featuring violinist Aaron Berofsky, violist Amadi Azikiwe, cellist Tobias Werner, and pianist Read Gainsford.

Washington Conservatory Concert Series

Members of the Pressenda Chamber Players – performing repertoire for violin, viola, cello, and piano – will be featured as part of the Washington Conservatory Concert Series. Saturday, Feb. 3, 8 p.m. at Westmoreland Congregational UCC Church, 1 Westmoreland Circle, Bethesda. Free (donations welcome). Audience members are invited to a post-concert Wine & Words in the church social hall. Visit www.westmorelanducc.org/.

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

ONGOING

The Underpants. Through Feb. 4, various times at the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre, 603 Edmonston Drive, Rockville. Rockville Little Theatre will continue its 70th consecutive season with “The Underpants,” written by actor, comedian, musician and writer Steve Martin. “The Underpants” contains some mature themes and humor and is recommended for ages 13 and over. \$22 for adults and \$20 for seniors and students. Call the box office at 240-314-8690, or visit fscottfitzgerald.showare.com.

The Wonder People. Through Feb. 25 at Photoworks Gallery, in Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd. “The Wonder People” exhibit is a series of portraits of children and adults caught in the global refugee crisis. Photographer Dorte Verner captured the exhibited photographs of people from Afghanistan, Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Kurdistan, Myanmar, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria and more over the past one and a half years. Visit www.glenechopark.org.

WEDNESDAY/JAN. 31

Night of Design Thinking, Inspiration and Activities. 6 p.m. at St. Andrew’s Episcopal School (Student Center), 8804 Postoak Road, Potomac. New York Times bestselling author and Maryland gubernatorial candidate Alec Ross will be guest speaker for this Night of Design Thinking, Inspiration and Activities. This event will allow elementary-aged students to participate in activities where they will exercise their design skills and flex their creativity. Visit saes.org.

JAN. 31-MARCH 3

“Handbagged.” Round House Theatre, 4545 East-West Highway, Bethesda. In Handbagged, the fourth wall comes down as Queen Elizabeth II and Margaret Thatcher tell their respective stories of working together. Their stories frequently conflict not only with each other but also with themselves, as we see both younger and older versions of each leader. Visit RoundHouseTheatre.org.

SATURDAY/FEB. 3

Interfaith Harmony Concert. 7 p.m.

at Washington D.C. Temple Visitors’ Center - Auditorium, 9900 Stonybrook Drive, Kensington. Mosaic Harmony presents the Third Annual Interfaith Harmony Concert in celebration of 2018 United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week. Free admission and parking. Visit www.mosaicarmony.org.

Concert Series. 8 p.m. at Westmoreland Congregational UCC Church, 1 Westmoreland Circle, Bethesda. Members of the Pressenda Chamber Players – performing repertoire for violin, viola, cello, and piano – will be featured as part of the Washington Conservatory Concert Series. Free (donations welcome). Audience members are invited to a post-concert Wine & Words in the church social hall. Visit www.westmorelanducc.org/.

Swing Dance. 8-9 p.m. drop-in lesson; 9 p.m.-midnight dance at Spanish Ballroom at Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Boulevard, Glen Echo. Swing Dance with Baltimore’s Sarah Sullivan and The New Old-Fashioneds. \$20. Visit www.americanswing.org.

SUNDAY/FEB. 4

Lunar New Year Celebration. 4:30-7:30 p.m. at the Potomac Community Center, 11315 Falls Road, Potomac. Performances (70 performers), activities, ethnic appetizers, Lion Dance and more. The community is invited. Visit www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rec/where/centers/potomac.html.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 7

Meet Harriet Tubman. 7 p.m. Davis Library, 6400 Democracy Boulevard, Bethesda. Janice Curtis Green will play Harriet Tubman and reenact Tubman’s story introducing the child and the woman who became the hero of the Underground Railroad. Call 240-777-0922 or visit www.montgomerycountymd.gov/library/.

FEB. 7-MARCH 3

“US FOUR.” Various times at Gallery B, 7700 Wisconsin Ave., Suite E, Bethesda. “US FOUR” features artwork by Katty Biglari, Yolaine Rilhac Brochard, Nora Maccoby and Grazia Montalto. Visit www.bethesda.org.

FRIDAY/FEB. 9

Opening Reception. 6-8 p.m. at Gallery B, 7700 Wisconsin Ave., Suite E, Bethesda. “US FOUR” features

artwork by Katty Biglari, Yolaine Rilhac Brochard, Nora Maccoby and Grazia Montalto. The exhibit will be on display from Feb. 7-March 3, 2018. Visit www.bethesda.org.

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

Extreme Chopin. 8 p.m. in Strathmore’s Concert Hall, 5301 Tuckerman Lane, North Bethesda. Join pianist Brian Ganz this Valentine’s Day weekend on Feb. 10 as he continues his unprecedented journey through the complete works of Frédéric Chopin with “Chopin’s Hidden Gems & All Time Favorites.” Ticket prices are \$28-\$88; free for ages 7-17. Call 301-581-5100 or visit www.nationalphilharmonic.org.

FEB. 10-MARCH 18

“The Princess & the Pauper – A Bollywood Tale.” Various times in Imagination Stage’s Annette M. and Theodore N. Lerner Family Theatre, Auburn Avenue, Bethesda. In this Bollywood-inspired musical adaptation of the classic Mark Twain novel, commoners work long hours to support the luxurious lifestyle of the palace royals. Rani, a shy dressmaker’s daughter, dreams of ruling the Sultanate with generosity and justice. Meanwhile, a corrupt Wazir plots to steal the throne, and a spoiled Princess Razia longs wistfully for freedom beyond the palace walls. Tickets start at \$10. Visit www.imaginationstage.org.

TUESDAY/FEB. 13

Pancake Supper. 6-7:30 p.m. at St. James’ Episcopal Church Parish Hall, 11815 Seven Locks Road, Potomac. Join the St. James’ community for a Shrove Tuesday pancake supper prepared by the Men’s Prayer Breakfast Group. A free-will offering will be accepted. Call 301-762-8040 or visit stjamespotomac.org.

THURSDAY-SUNDAY/FEB. 16-19

Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival. 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville. The festival provides live musical performances, workshops and seminars. See www.midatlanticjazzfestival.org.

SATURDAY/FEB. 17

Play in a Day. 8 p.m. at Imagination Stage, 4908 Auburn Ave., Bethesda. Six professional Washington, D.C. area theatre companies will write, direct, rehearse and perform original plays in only 24 hours. General admission tickets are \$15 and can be purchased at www.bethesda.org.



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VALENTINE'S DAY



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE PICKET FENCE

Accessories like Moon Melt Lotion Bars by Moon Valley Organics at The Picket Fence in Burke might appeal to those who want to create to a spa at home.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HOME ON CAMERON

A bouquet of felt flowers in assorted colors like these that were handmade in Nepal, is a gift with a charitable flair from Home on Cameron in Alexandria.

Gifts for Valentine's Day

Local tastemakers offer thoughtful giving suggestions.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

One of the most heavily gifted holidays is Valentine's Day. In fact, much of the fun is the anticipation. In preparation for Cupid's Day, a few local style aficionados offer up ideas to sweeten the celebration.

For those deserving some pampering, create a spa experience at home with NW Rainforest Body Cream, advises Isabel Chiotti of Sonoran Rose in Potomac.

"Soaps and candles also make great gifts," she said. "It can also be fun to think outside the box," said Courtney Thomas of The Picket Fence in Burke. "Surprise your Valentine with a gift certificate for a spa day or a shopping spree at her favorite store. Put together a basket of a few of her favorite things."

Among the things that Thomas suggests are Moon Melt Lotion Bars by Moon Valley Organics. Decadent and indulgent, these scented moisturizers combine herbs and beeswax to help fight dry skin, she says.

For the romantics, Susan Nelson and Todd Martz of Home on Cameron in Alexandria suggest a bouquet of felt flowers in assorted colors, handmade in Nepal. These eye-catching, fair trade buds offer bursts of color and benefit women artisans who are heads of households.

For the bedhead, Amanda Mertins of Patina Polished Living in Old Town Alexandria recommends silk charmeuse pillowcases by Branche. "These won-

derful pillowcases help preserve one's hairdo and help to keep away wrinkles," she said.

For the stylish, a fur neck warmer is a cozy suggestion that Mertins offers. And for the traditionalists, "Flowers are always welcome and, of course, the color red being very popular as it conveys deep emotion," she said. "Don't be afraid to give varieties other than roses."

For the nostalgic, Kevin Sweitzer of Thos. Moser, Handmade American Furniture, believes that an heirloom quality beacon box to hold keepsakes would be ideal. "[It's] meant to be passed down from generation to generation," he said. "A really nice and memorable Valentine's gift."

For the entertainers, Nelson and Martz suggest all natural, hand blown glass candles, while Mertins says bar accessories work as gifts for mixologists.

For those with a sweet tooth, Chiotti recommends hot cocoa by the Cocoa Company, brown sugar toffee by Gearharts Fine Chocolates or caramels by Big Picture Farm.

For almost everyone,

Suzie Clayton of Dalton Brody suggests picture frames. "From wood to Lucite to silver, there's something for everyone," she said. "It's more about finding the right thing for the right person."

"Some of the most meaningful gifts are those which are handmade including cards and a home-cooked romantic dinner," added Mertins. "Don't forget the bubbly and always lots and lots of chocolate."

"It can be fun to think outside the box."

— Courtney Thomas, The Picket Fence

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PHOTO COURTESY OF SONORAN ROSE

A basket of spa items like NW Rainforest Body Cream from Sonoran Rose in Potomac is an indulgent Valentine's Day gift.



Susan Nelson and Todd Martz of Home on Cameron suggest all natural, hand blown glass candles.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HOME ON CAMERON