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# McLean CONNECTION



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PHOTO BY STEVE HIBBARD/THE CONNECTION

**Master of Ceremonies Corky Palmer addresses the Save the Farm Rally, sponsored by the Friends of Claude Moore Colonial Farm on Thursday, May 31, 2018, at the Pavilions of Turkey Run.**



PHOTO BY STEVE HIBBARD/THE CONNECTION

**Dr. Virginia Norton of McLean addresses the Save the Farm Rally, sponsored by the Friends of Claude Moore Colonial Farm on Thursday, May 31, 2018, at the Pavilions of Turkey Run.**

## A Save the Farm Rally

BY STEVE HIBBARD  
THE CONNECTION

**T**he U.S. National Park Service wants to close Claude Moore Colonial Farm at Turkey Run in McLean on Dec. 21, 2018. Since 1973, the farm has been a living history 18th century museum that portrays family life on a small, low-income farm just prior to the Revolutionary War. A Save the Farm Rally, sponsored by the Friends of Claude Moore Colonial Farm, was held on Thursday, May 31, 2018 in the pouring rain, at the Pavilions of Turkey Run, to get the word out to residents on what they can do to save it.

According to Elliott Curzon, a member of the Board of Directors of Friends of Claude Moore Colonial Farm Negotiating Committee, the Parks Service has told them that they intend to close the farm in December because they would not sign their agreement.

"The basic issue is that the agreement that they presented would increase our operating costs and reduce our ability to generate revenue. And it would put us into a death spiral. The key issues are the term of the agreement, the operating limitations they would impose on us, and the ability to generate revenue by operating the Pavilion. Those are the issues we've been trying to deal with for some months," he said.

He added: "It took the Park Service six years to begin negotiating seriously and they presented a take-it-or-leave-it demand. The upshot is that we intend to save the farm through the assistance of our Congresswoman, Rep. Barbara Comstock (R-10), and the aid of other members of the House, including our local delegation who are questioning the Park Services' activities with respect to our agreement. The farm is unique; we are the only independently operating, self-funding farm in the United States. We get no financial support from the Federal government. In our view, we should be the exemplar of a public-private partner-



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

**Since 1973, the Claude Moore Colonial Farm has been a living history museum serving 2 million visitors.**

ship but the Park Service doesn't see it that way yet."

**ACCORDING TO DR. VIRGINIA NORTON** of McLean, President of the Board of Friends of Claude Moore Colonial Farm, as a result of receiving notice that the Park Service intends to close the farm, "we will use every resource available – public, private, legislative, administrative – to keep the farm open and operating for the public," she said.

"We are rallying the troops, really, to write their Congressmen, to write their Senators. Barbara Comstock, our representative, has introduced legislation H.R.-5201, and we want it to be passed and we need our Senators to introduce the companion bill in the Senate and so we are encouraging them to do that. And if they want, they can write the Park Service and Secretary of the Interior, Ryan Zinke, and so we are rallying the troops," she said. Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton is also a co-sponsor of legislation

**Residents try to save Claude Moore Colonial Farm, which may close in December.**

visitors benefit from the services of partners, concession operators and volunteers, national parks belong to all Americans, and none of them are privately operated," she said.

"The National Park Service is focusing on the future. We look forward to working with the public and the many dedicated volunteers to shape what that looks like," she said.

**OF THE RALLY** with 100 people that included hot dogs and a cash bar, Anna Eberly, Board Member of the Friends of Claude Moore Colonial Farm, said: "The idea is to get people together, let them know what we're doing to save the farm, hear their ideas to saving the farm and then give them materials and literature that they can hand out to their friends and co-workers so that we can get the word out even more. The purpose is to keep the farm operating; that's all we want to do."

Added Farm Site Manager Daniel Gray: "I would be very disappointed if the farm closed because the visitors would be losing the expertise of our 18th century farmers, our costume interpreters who have studied history and who are very experienced from a first-hand perspective from being out in the fields and actually using the tools and wearing 18th century clothes all day."

Tim Meisburger, a Board Member who built a copy of the Ball-Sellers farmhouse on the property and who has been volunteering since 1986, added: "I think that our objective is to save the farm for the children of the region. I think adults really love coming out here but more than anything, the children are the ones that they don't know where food comes from; they are not used to animals; they're not used to crops. They have no real exposure to farm life and they have less and less exposure in school to history — so the farm serves two purposes to help teach the children about their past but also helping them to live in the world."

introduced to keep the farm open.

Dr. Norton said there is a petition on Change.Org with almost 5,000 signatures directed to Secretary Zinke, asking him to intervene and relieve them of having to follow the Park Service rules that only apply to Park Service sites.

According to Jenny Anzelmo-Sarles, a spokeswoman for the National Park Service: "There continues to be a lack of understanding about the agreement the National Park Service offered to the Friends of Claude Moore Colonial Farm. We acted in earnest to ensure the relationship's future, exhausting all possible legal options to continue the relationship including a potential lease, a potential concessions contract, and finally a proposed 10-year cooperative agreement. The cooperative agreement included standard terms for National Park Service partners across the country. At the end of the day, the Friends of Claude Moore Colonial Farm rejected all of these options."

"While the National Park Service and park



# McLean High Band Receives Sudler Flag of Honor

School Band Program, students and faculty honored by the John Philip Sousa Foundation.

BY TRACY STRELSE

There was not one, but three standing ovations in the McLean High School (MHS) auditorium on the evening of Wednesday, May 30, 2018. The auspicious occasion was a formal awards ceremony to celebrate approximately seven years of effort from roughly 240 McLean High School students each year, who comprise the concert band, marching band, guard, jazz, all-state, all-district, and percussion. Their cumulative effort resulted in the school being the recipient of one of the nation's highest awards that can be presented to an ensemble band program. This rare, prestigious and coveted music recognition is known as the Sudler Flag of Honor by the John Philip Sousa Foundation.

Tuba player, guest conductor and Project Chair for the Sudler Flag of Honor, Roy C. Holder, said the award winners are deemed to possess "quality beyond anything normal." He was speaking on behalf of a 22-person committee, comprising former Sudler Flag honorees, who together decided that the Sudler Flag of Honor would be bestowed upon McLean High School in late December of 2017. The presentation of the award was conducted during a special Wednesday night concert performed by the MHS Symphonic Band.

**THE FACTS** prove just how rare and musically heroic it is to receive this award. There are 25,000 public high schools in the entire United States. Only 80 of those schools have ever been awarded the Sudler Flag of Honor. The largest concentration of awardees are located within the state of Texas. The second largest concentration of awardees are located right here in Fairfax County, Virginia. Less than 10 schools (seven to be exact) have ever received the Sudler Flag of Honor two times. More than half of those seven awardees (five to be exact) are located right here in Fairfax County, Virginia.

McLean High School's Band Program is one of only five schools in Fairfax County to ever receive the Sudler Flag of Honor two times. This is a big deal for Band Director,



Band Director Chris Weise and McLean Symphonic Band.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARION MEAKEM PHOTOGRAPHY



Chris and Christina Weise and children.

Chris Weise. The award represents a culmination of seven years of work that has to be tediously and painstakingly recorded and documented in order to show a whole history. "This is all about the students," he said. "We are celebrating all the students who have come through here. This award represents each one of you!"

The audience comprised proud on-lookers band parents with beaming smiles and occasionally misty eyes, as well as family, friends and many other contributing members upon whom the award depends. There was a sense of something big happening. At least seven other Sudler Flag awardees traveled to attend this ceremony. Band directors from Mr. Weise's elementary school,

middle school and high school band programs watched fondly as the pupil they mentored, and now profoundly respected, smiled for pictures next to Roy Holder and the Sudler Flag. Even MHS Principal, Ellen Reilly, and Mrs. Christina Weise, joined the band on stage as sign-language interpreter and voice narrator, respectively, during the Symphonic Band's performance of Their Blossoms Down by Samuel Hazo.

Chris Weise made sure to thank Deidra Denson, Associate Director of Bands; David Wolf, Director of Percussion; Scott Weinhold, Director of Jazz Ensembles; the MHS Band Instruction staff: Susan Hayes (Flute), Jim Moseley (Oboe), Lynn Gaubatz (Bassoon), Kristen Sheridan (Clarinet), Ed

Fraedrich (Saxophone), Jim Bittner (Trumpet), Carl J. Bianchi (French Horn) and the MHS Pyramid Band Directors at Longfellow Middle School (Brad Zimmerman, Carina Gutjahr) and the Elementary School Directors (Megan Aquilina, Michael Bellinger, Leslie DuPertuis, Michael Bandy, Allison Parrell, Ted Frederick, Art Pittman, Marsha Tarr, Dan Freeman and Paul Erickson).

Weise gave special thanks to Sean Rolon, the MHS Performing Arts Department Administrator and to Principal Ellen Reilly, both of whom have provided enthusiastic and unwavering support for all of the music programs. "This award wouldn't be possible without their support," said Weise.

He gave a heartfelt shout out to his wife, Christina, and his parents, saying, "I can't tell you how much family is important to me. This takes so much time, and I can't thank my family and wife enough for all their support over the years."

**THE CONCERT** performance and award presentation was a moving experience that can be nicely surmised by a few profound words said by Denny Stokes, the founding conductor of Symphonic Winds for the Northern Virginia Youth Winds (NVYW) program, and also a former Sudler Flag award recipient himself during his 32 years as an FCPS band teacher. He said, "People in this room are stars the world will never know."

How fortunate the city of McLean is to have such a high concentration of musical talent in Fairfax County. How truly special and uniquely distinguished. FCPS high school performances are free events and open to the public. The entertainment value and affordability of these concerts is a rare occurrence in Northern Virginia. It's an opportunity begging to be exploited by those with good taste, who also know a good deal when they see it. There are several dining options nearby that make grabbing dinner and a concert during the week a very doable, pleasantly surprising date night. Children also love the performances because they are casual and normally completed within an hour. Bringing the community together and sharing the love of music is one way to help our music stars shine more brightly and spread their light.

## Community Rallies to Save the Farm

FROM PAGE 3

Corky Palmer, Master of Ceremonies for the rally who ran the Environmental Learning Center and Gift Shop for 10 years, added: "The significant thing about Claude Moore Colonial Farm is that it is a family-oriented place. My wife first started here back in 1990 with kids for the Environmental Living Center, would bring them out for overnight camping for three nights of camping and she is always hearing back

from her students how wonderful it was that they got to come to Claude Moore Colonial Farm."

Chris Weiss, retired Fairfax County teacher and volunteer since 1986, added: "I certainly hope there will be no closure and I think that would be a real big mistake for the community and the state of Virginia, Maryland, the District of Columbia and Pennsylvania, all the people who come here and have the experience of seeing an indentured farm, so I certainly hope the

powers-that-be get their senses together and realize it's such a valuable asset for the community to have."

Cindy Palmer, a retired Fairfax County teacher from Chantilly, added: "We need to keep the farm opened because it's the only place where children and families can come and see how common people lived. You've got places like Mount Vernon and Williamsburg, but that's how the wealthy lived. This shows how 90 percent of Americans were living at the time. We need to

save that."

"This place is beautiful; it's authentic; it's a wonderful place to bring children or a family to learn as much about history and the real history of what people went through back then," said JoAnn Abbott, a volunteer re-enactor from Dale City who attended the rally. "I love re-enacting and I love teaching. I've been a teacher in the past; I've been a re-enactor since my 20s... Leave this little oasis of history and beauty so our children can learn from it."



## PEOPLE

# McLean Graduate to Teach in Thailand

**Mary Grace Sheers of McLean awarded Fulbright Scholarship.**

**S**ixteen University of Virginia alumni and graduate students will pursue their work on foreign shores with the help of the Fulbright U.S. Student Program this year – a record number for UVA, which recently was cited among the top producers of Fulbright Scholars in the nation.

The U.S. Department of State and the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board offered the grants to the UVA alumni and students, who will be among the more than 1,900 U.S. citizens who will travel abroad for the 2018-19 academic year.

UVA's Fulbright Scholars will teach English in foreign countries such as Argentina, Georgia and Sri Lanka, or pursue research and graduate studies in Cambodia and the United Kingdom.

The Fulbright program is the flagship international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government and is designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. Its primary source of funding is an annual appropriation made by Congress to the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs; participating governments and host institutions, corporations and foundations in foreign countries and in the U.S. also provide direct and indirect support.

Since its inception in 1946 under legislation introduced by the late U.S. Sen. J. William Fulbright of Arkansas, the Fulbright program has given approximately 380,000 scholars the opportunity to contribute to finding solutions to shared international concerns.

Mary Grace Sheers of McLean, who graduated in May as a linguistics student and a political and social thought major with a focus on disability theory and education policy, will be an English teaching assistant in Thailand.



PHOTO BY DAN ADDISON, UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS  
**Mary Grace Sheers of McLean**

An Echols Scholar and a Jefferson Scholar, Sheers was a chair and moderator for Sustained Dialogue; co-founder of Converge, a student-run group that facilitates dialogues between opposing political viewpoints; senior resident and resident assistant for Housing and Residence Life; and an English tutor for Volunteers with International Students, Staff and Scholars. She was an intern at the District of Columbia Public Schools.

A graduate of Holton-Arms School, Sheers plans to work as a teacher, administrator and curriculum coordinator for students who speak languages other than English in the U.S.

Elizabeth Wittner, academic director and International Teaching Assistant program coordinator at the Center for American English Language and Culture, worked with Sheers during her Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages certification process.

"She is driven by genuine curiosity about learning, languages, literacy and culture, and she seeks out new and challenging perspectives," Wittner said. "She always positions herself as a learner first, and for that she listens actively and completely."

Sheers assisted one of her students with her citizenship process and co-wrote a Swahili-based citizenship study packet that VISAS continues to use.

"The real key to her success as both a student and a teacher, and just as an all-around great person, is the sheer joy she finds in learning and interacting with people seemingly different from herself," Wittner said. "As a Fulbright, she is going to thrive."

### WEEK IN MCLEAN

## Safe Community Coalition to Hold Annual Meeting

Safe Community Coalition will hold its Annual Meeting on June 12 at 7 p.m. in the Community Room at the McLean Government Center (1437 Balls Hill Rd, McLean). The meeting is an opportunity to share and reflect on the year, as well as to begin the planning process for next year,

and SCC always values community input.

SCC encourages anyone who has participated in their events this year (or wanted to!) to come hear more about the volunteer opportunities moving forward. Their mission is to bring together parents, educators, law enforcement, faith communities, mental health professionals, and community members to support our youth. There are ways to help—big and small—so if you are interested in learning more contact them at [info@mcleanscc.org](mailto:info@mcleanscc.org). The Annual Meeting is open to the community.

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## Potential for Progress on Pension Reform

BY PAT HERRITY  
SPRINGFIELD DISTRICT SUPERVISOR  
(R)



**T**he Fairfax County Board of Supervisors finally appears poised to make additional changes to the county's unsustainable pension plan. After delaying action for the last three years, a number of options have been put on the table for the board to consider at its June 26 Personnel Committee meeting. There has been some board support for adopting the entire package but the outcome is far from certain. If the package is adopted it will reduce pension costs for new employees by 19 to 25 percent and will still leave county employees with a pension plan better than any of our surrounding jurisdictions. While I believe the board missed the opportunity to develop an overall compensation plan that would provide a mix of salary, pensions, and benefits that would attract the best employees and teachers, these changes are meaningful and I support all of the changes to the general county employee pension plan and most of the changes to the public safety plans.

Currently, employees that begin employment with the county right out of school can retire as early as age 55 with a full pension benefit

that is higher than those of surrounding jurisdictions. On top of that pension benefit they get a benefit unheard of today — a pre social security supplement — as early as age 55. The pre social security supplement is an additional county paid supplement that equals the social security payment they would have received if they were 67. Unlike real social security payments that increase with

cost of living (less than 1 percent last year), this county paid benefit increases at a guaranteed 3 percent. These retirement benefits are far in excess of what is typical in today's work environment — even in the public sector.

Fairfax County currently has an unfunded pension liability in excess of \$5.5 billion. Pensions alone currently cost the county 30 cents on top of every payroll dollar (about 70 cents if you include all benefits). Funding our pension liabilities competes with employee and teacher salary increases and our ability to fund the high quality of services county residents have come to expect. Since joining the board in 2008 I have been advocating to address our compensation and pension issues.

County staff did an outstanding job of simplifying this very difficult material. Here a link to the details: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/board-personnel-committee-meeting-may-22-2018>.

The changes are anticipated to take effect for new employees hired after July 1, 2019 and because they appropriately impact new employees only, the savings will be in future years.

The proposed changes are summarized below:

- ❖ Increasing the Minimum Retirement Age from 55 to 60 and set it at 50 for public safety employees

- ❖ Increasing from the Rule of 85 to the Rule of 90 — full retirement at salary plus age for general county employees

- ❖ Increasing the Salary Averaging Period from 3 years to 5 years

- ❖ Eliminate the Provision that increases the retirement annuity by 3 percent annually

- ❖ Increase the Employee Contribution Rate by approximately 1 percent

The changes were presented as a package and there was some support for enacting the entire package of reforms; however, the board may advance a more limited package of reforms at its meeting on June 26. Unfortunately, it appears as though the public will not have a formal opportunity to weigh in on the reforms until after the package has been selected and it comes to public hearing in September or October this year. It is important that supervisors hear from residents before the Personnel Committee meeting on June 26 with their opinions on the package.

## Green for Medicaid

BY EILEEN FILLER-CORN  
STATE DELEGATE (D-41)



**P**ressing the green “yes” button at my desk on the floor of the House of Delegates last Wednesday night was literally the most consequential vote I have ever taken. It truly was the best day for me, ever, in the Virginia House of Delegates.

People often ask me why I serve, and I always respond “because I truly want to make a difference.” The fact is, if I were ever in doubt, I can look at this vote and say, yes we can and yes we do make a difference, in this case, to over 300,000 Virginians who had no insurance. These people are not just statistics, they are neighbors, family members and friends.

As I drove back from Richmond that night, I think it finally sunk in: Medicaid expansion will become a reality in Virginia. We passed a budget that reflects our values, providing well-deserved access to healthcare for over 300,000 people, teachers and state employees will receive raises, there will be additional money for mental health and for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities and insurance will be provided for people with autism up until age 21, while funds will be added to our rainy-day fund.

I have always gone to Richmond with a goal to listen and get things done, working with everyone, finding areas of commonality. This budget is a perfect example of Democrats and Republicans coming together to do what is

right for the Commonwealth and its citizens. Gov. Ralph Northam, former Gov. Terry McAuliffe, all of our Democratic members of the House and Senate, as well as a number of Republicans and so many others: individuals, groups and stakeholders worked earnestly in support of Medicaid expansion for over five years and we finally did it.

We were victorious because everyone came together and because we elected so many new diverse but like-minded voices into the House of Delegates in November of 2017. As our Democratic leader aptly put it, we showed “the power of 49.” But 49 is not 51; we needed leadership on the other side of the aisle, as we had through Speaker Kirk Cox, Appropriations Chairman Chris Jones and Commerce and Labor Chairman Terry Kilgore who were instrumental in leading support among Republicans in the House. Senators

## The most important vote I have ever taken.

Emmett Hanger, Dick Saslaw, George Barker, and Janet Howell were essential in leading the Senate as well, and Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax broke a number of ties in the Senate to block hostile amendments to our budget. This was truly a team effort.

Thanks to the passage of this budget there will also be funding for more judges and additional individuals with disabilities will have access to Medicaid waivers. Investment was increased in economic development while additional money will be provided to expand broadband and preserve our AAA bond rating. Through this budget, we will create opportunities for working families to thrive. We will build a better, healthier, stronger Virginia.

I will always remember pressing that green button on my desk on May 30, 2018 while watching the vote board light up green in support of a budget we can all be proud of. During my time in office, this was truly the most important vote I have ever taken.

## Send Father's Day Photos

Father's Day is Sunday, June 17, and once again this newspaper will publish a gallery of Father's Day photos.

Every year at this time, we put out the call for photographs of fathers and their children, grandfathers and their children and grandchildren.

Send in photos with the following information: the town where you live, the names of everyone in the picture, the approximate date the picture was taken, the ages of the children and a sentence or two about what is happening and where the photograph was taken. Be sure to tell us your town name and neighborhood. Photos are due by June 12.

You can submit your photos online at [www.connectionnewspapers.com/fathersday](http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/fathersday). You can also email photos to [editors@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:editors@connectionnewspapers.com).

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## WELLBEING

# Families Meditating Together

Family mindfulness practices can boost overall wellbeing.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

Sitting on cushions in a dimly lit corner of the living room, a family of five struggles to relax. But when a lithe woman in flowing yoga pants and a pale grey ballet-wrap top brings her hands together and the gentle sound of Tibetan meditation cymbals fills the air, their eyes close, their shoulders relax and they begin to breathe deeply.

"This is how I like to begin all of my family sessions," said meditation teacher Pleasance Baechli of Transcendental Meditation and Mindfulness Center in Bethesda, Md. "It allows people to calm their minds and bring their attention to the breath and what's going on in their bodies. For a moment, there's nowhere else they need to be and nothing that they need to do."

This is the nature of a family mindfulness session, a chance for families to unplug and disconnect from a world of tablets, smart phones, long commutes, sports practices, homework and errands. Such sessions, says Baechli, offer opportunities for families to reconnect with one another and strengthen their bonds, and are not as difficult to establish as one might think.

"Mindfulness can sound complicated and confusing, especially for children," she said. "But it's simply a state of awareness, and that just means noticing what we're feeling and what we're sensing at the present moment. And it's noticing those thoughts and feelings without judgement or criticism. It's accepting them and letting them pass through our bodies."

Carving out time to meditate in a overloaded schedule can be tall order, but simplicity can help overcome that roadblock. "Unfortunately, the older the kids get and the more activities they have, the harder it gets to make time for quiet and meditation, even though we need it more, of course," said Elizabeth Rees, a mother of three and the associate rector and leader of meditation practices at Saint Aidan's Episcopal Church in Alexandria. "I try to teach my kids breathing techniques and we have a few favorite meditations that we practice periodically before bed. There are also some great [smartphone] apps [like] Insight Timer, Calm and Headspace."

Understanding what mindfulness is and what it is not can help avoid frustration from unmet expectations. "Grasping the concept of mindfulness is tough for some kids and sitting still for long periods of time to practice can be torture," said Baechli. "Mindfulness is simply focusing on your thoughts and feelings as they are right in this moment. That's it. Mindfulness is not a cure-all. Don't expect it to turn your high-energy son into a quiet child or your daughter



PHOTO BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

**Cymbals and meditation cushions are tools that mindfulness teacher Pleasance Baechli uses in her family mediation sessions.**

who has trouble paying attention and is struggling in school into a straight-A student. That's probably not going to happen."

What it can do however, when practiced over time, is help regulate emotions and strengthen one's ability to concentrate and focus, advises Anne Navolio, Ph.D., a child psychologist based in McLean. She points to a 2012 study by researchers at the University of Washington which credits weekly mindfulness sessions with an improved ability to concentrate. She also references a 2016 study by the University of Wisconsin which showed that even a five minute meditation session each day can increase one's ability to deal with stressful situations. "For beginning a daily practice, start with shorts sessions, especially for young children. Even one-minute of sitting can be beneficial," she said. "And if your kids aren't even interested in that, don't force it."

Incorporating meditation music and concepts that children can understand can make the process easier, advises Baechli. "I like to use cymbals at the beginning of a practice or sound a bell," she said. "Those sounds usually last about 30-45 seconds and sometimes I tell kids to sit quietly and focus on what they're hearing until they can no longer hear it. I also tell kids, especially boys, to use their superhero senses to determine what they can hear and smell all around them."

Spending time outside, either on a hike, nature walk or a trek through the park, can be an opportunity to practice mindfulness as a family, says Navolio. "Simply walking in silence for even a few short minutes and noticing birds, squirrels and cars that are passing or even the scents of freshly mowed grass or food cooking in a restaurant you pass can be a mindfulness practice."

Leading by example can get children engaged in mindfulness practices. "I encourage and model gratitude and attention to small things in the world around us," said Rees. "I definitely think the more mindful and present we can be, the less angst we will have about the past and the future, neither of which we have much control over."

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# CALENDAR

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

## ONGOING

**“Swimming with Whales.”** Through June 24: Thursdays, 7:30 p.m.; Fridays at 8 p.m.; Saturdays at 2 and 8 p.m.; and Sundays at 2 p.m. at 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons. This world premiere production invites audiences into a world of healing, compassion, and renewal. While Visiting his family’s secluded cottage on the shores of the Atlantic ocean, Owen, a typically urban 15-year-old boy, and his fisherman father clash until an unlikely and healing communion with an injured whale awakens in Owen a forgotten boyhood and connection with the sea. General admission, \$33; senior (65+), \$30; student and military, \$15. Closed captions and audio description will be offered for select performances. Purchase tickets at [www.1ststage.org](http://www.1ststage.org) or 703-854-1856.

**Photography Exhibit: “Nature’s Palette.”** Through June 30, at Katie’s Coffee House, 760 Walker Road, Great Falls. Cindy Dibbs takes every opportunity to enjoy and photograph nature whether hiking in Great Falls National Park, Glacier National Park or strolling along the beach. Her photos reflect the beauty of nature and she hopes the images will inspire others to protect and treasure the valuable gift of nature. Visit [www.cindydibbs.com](http://www.cindydibbs.com).

**Vienna Art Society Exhibition.** Through late June at North County Government Center, 1801 Cameron Glen Drive, Reston. Visit [viennaartsociety.org](http://viennaartsociety.org).



**Max and Zach selling lemonade at their 2017 Max and Zach’s Lemonade Stand from 2017. Jeffrey Foor, Max, Zach and Melissa Weinstock**

## Max and Zach’s Lemonade Stand

Each year since 2014, Max (a leukemia survivor) and his brother Zach hold a charity lemonade stand in support of childhood cancer research. They will have lemonade, treats, snow cones, spin art and more. Max and Zach would love to see their friends and neighbors at this community event. All proceeds benefit Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation—a childhood cancer research foundation. Sunday, June 10, noon-3:30 p.m. at Chesterbrook Elementary School, 1753 Kirby Road, McLean. Free. Donations accepted. Email [weinstockmr@yahoo.com](mailto:weinstockmr@yahoo.com) or visit [www.alexlemonade.org/mypage/1438237](http://www.alexlemonade.org/mypage/1438237).

**Vienna Farmers Market.** 8 a.m.-noon, Saturdays, through Nov. 3 at Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St. S.E., Vienna. The Vienna Farmers Market, hosted by the Optimist Club of Greater Vienna, has more than 30 vendors from across the region, the Vienna Farmers Market provides locally-sourced fruits and vegetables and homemade eats. Throughout the year, great music will

be featured to accompany your shopping. Visit [www.optimistclubofgreatervienna.org/](http://www.optimistclubofgreatervienna.org/) for more.

**Oakton Farmers Market.** 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at Unity of Fairfax Church, 2854 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Year-round weekly farmers market in Oakton. Local produce, meats/eggs, dairy, baked goods, and more. Admission is free. Visit community-

[foodworks.org](http://foodworks.org).

**Great Falls Farmers Market.** Saturdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., 778 Walker Road, Great Falls. Music, vendors, fresh produce, fresh prepared food, delightful bakery, spices from around the world, wild-caught fish, grass-fed, free-range meats, organic-fed poultry and eggs. Email [kathleen@greatfallsfarmersmarket.org](mailto:kathleen@greatfallsfarmersmarket.org) for more.

**Free Tai Chi.** Every Saturday, from 7:55-9 a.m., Introduction and Beginners’ Practice, meet on the outdoor basketball court located directly behind the Dolley Madison Public Library, 1244 Oak Ridge Ave. in McLean Central Park, McLean. Call 703-759-9141 or visit [www.FreeTaiChi.org](http://www.FreeTaiChi.org) for more.

**The Freeman Store & Museum** Wednesday through Sunday noon-4 p.m. 131 Church St. NE, Vienna. The Freeman Store & Museum is dedicated to Preserving and promoting Vienna’s heritage through the identification, preservation, and interpretation of history significant places, events, and persons. [Historicviennainc.org](http://Historicviennainc.org)

**Bingo Night.** Sundays. 4 p.m. Flame Room, Vienna Volunteer Fire Department, 400 Center St. S, Vienna. \$10. [www.vvfd.org/bingo.html](http://www.vvfd.org/bingo.html).

**Gentle Yoga.** Thursdays, 6:30 p.m. Emmaus United Church of Christ, 900 E Maple Ave. E., Vienna. Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Gentle Kundalini Yoga, one free introductory session, senior discounts. Increase flexibility, improve breathing and health, reduce stress. Ravi Kaur has 15 years experience teaching yoga. \$15 per session. [www.edimprovement.org](http://www.edimprovement.org).

571-213-3192.

**The Golden Girls** of Northern Virginia, a senior women’s softball league, is looking for players. Any woman over the age of 40 is encouraged to join. All skill levels are welcome. Games are on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings in Vienna, April-October. Other activities during the year. Visit [www.goldengirls.org](http://www.goldengirls.org).

**Colvin Run Mill** open 11-4 p.m. daily, closed Tuesday. 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Fairfax County’s operational 19th century water powered gristmill, offers recreational and educational activities for all ages through daily tours, school programs and special events. Fees: \$7/adult, \$6 students 16+ with ID, \$5 children & seniors. Admission to park is free except for some special events.

**Fishing Rod Rentals.** Riverbend Park, 8700 Potomac Hills St., Great Falls. Rentals available during Visitor center hours. Fishing tackle and live bait are available for purchase. Reservations required for group rentals. \$6/rental (2 hour max). Valid driver’s license required. Rod/reel combinations are perfect for beginners and children. A Virginia or Maryland freshwater fishing license is required for those 16 years or older. The park does not sell fishing licenses. [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend-park/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend-park/).

## WEDNESDAY/JUNE 6

**Forestville Elementary Open House.** 4-5 p.m. at Forestville Elementary School, 1085 Utterback Store Road, Great Falls. Join the Forestville Elementary teachers, staff and PTA members to see the newly

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 9



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# CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 8

renovated building and the unveiling of the "Tile Wall." All members of the community are welcome to see the "new" school and enjoy refreshments. Free. Call 703-404-6000 or visit [www.Forestville.edu](http://www.Forestville.edu) for more.

## THURSDAY/JUNE 7

**Benefit of Chocolate.** 6-8:30 p.m. at Westwood Country Club, 800 Maple Ave., Vienna. The Stroke Comeback Center is hosting the Benefit of Chocolate cocktail reception to support its programs for survivors of stroke and brain trauma. Guests will enjoy a delicious hors d'oeuvres buffet, wine, artisan chocolate and an opportunity to bid on auction items. \$100. Visit [strokecomebackcenter.org](http://strokecomebackcenter.org) for more.

**Author Event: Joseph Esposito.** 7:30-9 p.m. at Patrick Henry Library, 101 Maple Ave. E., Vienna. Meet Joseph A. Esposito, the author of "Dinner in Camelot." Enjoy a glimpse into a long-gone era of politics and cultural activity at the Kennedy White House. Books available for sale and signing. Free admission. Call 703-938-0405 or visit [librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/3931227](http://librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/3931227) for more.

## FRIDAY/JUNE 8

**Summer on the Green: Vienna Idol Finale.** 6:30 p.m. area residents can catch a new and diverse musical act at the Town Green or at Chillin' on Church. Bring blankets and chairs, but please leave Fido and any other pets at home. The concerts are free and open to the public. Rain date is June 9. Visit [www.viennava.gov](http://www.viennava.gov) for more.

**Tyson's Concert Series: The Legwarmers.** 6:30-8 p.m. on the Plaza at Tysons Corner Center. Tysons Corner Center's 5th annual free Summer Concert Series offers a variety of musical guests and has proven to be a popular event for families, couples and teenagers. The Plaza is located off of The Tysons Corner Metro Station of the Silver Line. Guests are encouraged to arrive early. Visit [www.tysonscornercenter.com/events/SummerConcertSeries2018](http://www.tysonscornercenter.com/events/SummerConcertSeries2018) for more.

## FRIDAY-SATURDAY/JUNE 8-9

**Used Book Sale.** 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Pre-sale open to members of the Friends of the Library Thursday, June 7, 6-8 p.m. Membership purchased at the door for the pre-sale-night-only, \$15. Thousands of lightly-used donated books, CDs, DVDs in every category. Many like new. Great for care packages, beach house, building home library, literacy programs, traveling companions. Free admission. Email [friendsofthegreatfallslibrary@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofthegreatfallslibrary@gmail.com) or call 703-757-8560.

## SUNDAY/JUNE 10

**Northern Virginia FARE Food Allergy Heroes Walk.** 9 a.m. at Nottoway Park, 9601 Courthouse Road, Vienna. Registration and activities will go from 9-10:30 a.m. and the walk begins at 10:45. There will be mission driven arts and crafts, a DJ, face and nail painting, engaging activities, allergy friendly vendors, superheroes, games, silent auction, photo booth, and of course,

a walk around the park. Registration is free, but required to participate. Visit [fare.foodallergy.org](http://fare.foodallergy.org).

**Max and Zach's Lemonade Stand.** Noon-3:30 p.m. at Chesterbrook Elementary School, 1753 Kirby Road, McLean. Each year since 2014, Max (a leukemia survivor) and his brother Zach hold a charity lemonade stand in support of childhood cancer research. They will have lemonade, treats, snow cones, spin art and more. All proceeds benefit Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation. Free. Donations accepted. Email [weinstockmr@yahoo.com](mailto:weinstockmr@yahoo.com) or visit [www.alexlemonade.org/mypage/1438237](http://www.alexlemonade.org/mypage/1438237).

**Concerts on the Green: Scott Kurt and Memphis 59.** 6-8 p.m. on the Great Falls Village Centre Green. Sundays throughout the summer, bring a picnic and chairs for an evening of free, live music. Visit [www.celebrategreatfalls.org](http://www.celebrategreatfalls.org) for more.

## TUESDAY/JUNE 12

**McLean Historical Society Meeting.** 7:30 p.m. in the temporary office of the McLean Community Center, 6631 Old Dominion Drive, McLean. The program will feature Carole Herrick presenting "A Walk Along the C&O Towpath." Free, all are welcome. Call 703-356-8223 for more.

## WEDNESDAY/JUNE 13

**Summer on the Green: Rocknocerous.** 6:30 p.m. area residents can catch a new and diverse musical act at the Town Green or at Chillin' on Church. Bring blankets and chairs, but please leave Fido and any other pets at home. The concerts

are free and open to the public. Sponsored by Vienna Moms, Inc. Visit [www.viennava.gov](http://www.viennava.gov) for more.

## FRIDAY/JUNE 15

**Read for Fun.** Fairfax County Public Library helps make reading fun by providing tools, access and incentives during its Summer Reading Adventure. The Summer Reading Adventure runs June 15-Sept. 1 and invites all children and teens – birth through high school – to read for fun over the summer. The theme in 2018 is "Reading Takes You Everywhere." Visit [research.fairfaxcounty.gov/summer-reading](http://research.fairfaxcounty.gov/summer-reading) for more.

**Chillin' on Church with The Rockits.** 6:30 p.m. area residents can catch a new and diverse musical act at the Town Green or at Chillin' on Church. Bring blankets and chairs, but please leave Fido and any other pets at home. The concerts are free and open to the public. Visit [www.viennava.gov](http://www.viennava.gov) for more.

**Tyson's Concert Series: Ryan Cabrera.** 6:30-8 p.m. on the Plaza at Tysons Corner Center. Tysons Corner Center's 5th annual free Summer Concert Series offers a variety of musical guests and has proven to be a popular event for families, couples and teenagers. The Plaza is located off of The Tysons Corner Metro Station of the Silver Line. Guests are encouraged to arrive early. Visit [www.tysonscornercenter.com/events/SummerConcertSeries2018](http://www.tysonscornercenter.com/events/SummerConcertSeries2018) for more.

## SUNDAY/JUNE 17

**Concerts on the Green: Wes Tucker and The Skillsets.** 6-8 p.m. on the Great Falls Village Centre Green. Sundays throughout the summer, bring a picnic and chairs for

an evening of free, live music. Visit [www.celebrategreatfalls.org](http://www.celebrategreatfalls.org) for more.

## FRIDAY/JUNE 22

**Tyson's Concert Series: Mandisa.** 6:30-8 p.m. on the Plaza at Tysons Corner Center. Tysons Corner Center's 5th annual free Summer Concert Series offers a variety of musical guests and has proven to be a popular event for families, couples and teenagers. The Plaza is located off of The Tysons Corner Metro Station of the Silver Line. Guests are encouraged to arrive early. Visit [www.tysonscornercenter.com/events/SummerConcertSeries2018](http://www.tysonscornercenter.com/events/SummerConcertSeries2018) for more.

**Summer on the Green: Wayne Tympanick Trio.** 6:30 p.m. area residents can catch a new and diverse musical act at the Town Green or at Chillin' on Church. Bring blankets and chairs, but please leave Fido and any other pets at home. The concerts are free and open to the public. Visit [www.viennava.gov](http://www.viennava.gov) for more.

**Opening Reception: "Exploring Colors & Textures."** 6:30-9:30 p.m. at IACC, Pars Place, 2236-C Gallows Road, Vienna. A solo painting exhibition by Ramin Abraham. Adults only. Email [info@iacommunitycenter.org](mailto:info@iacommunitycenter.org) or call 703-314-7240 for more.

## JUNE 22-JULY 31

**Art Exhibit: "Exploring Colors & Textures."** Gallery hours at IACC, Pars Place, 2236-C Gallows Road, Vienna. A solo painting exhibition by Ramin Abraham. Email [info@iacommunitycenter.org](mailto:info@iacommunitycenter.org) or call 703-314-7240 gallery hours.



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## OPINION

# Filling the Summer Gap

By JOE FAY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
FACETS



**F**ACETS recently threw a party. We recognized 115 students for their excellent academic achievement — all making the A and B honor rolls at their schools. Twelve of these students are graduating, moving on to higher forms of education.

We've gotten to know these students through our youth programs which we operate year-round in four low-income, subsidized communities where the average income for a family of four is near \$18,000. Through the youth program, staff and volunteers offer a variety of educational, preventative and enrichment programs to help young people, including mentoring and tutoring, and a variety of classes such as literacy, art, and computers.

With summer break around the corner, we know we have to work harder to help keep these children and teens from slipping. For kids, summer means fun. Time off for roller coasters, ice cream, picnics, swimming, camps and more. For many moms and dads, summer break means stress. This is especially true for families who live in or near the poverty level, like the young people we serve.

Summer can be a patchwork of child care and babysitters to fill in for the hours normally spent at

school. Or it can mean many hours alone for youth whose parents cannot afford to pay for camps or child care. In addition, summer can be a hungry time for youth who rely on the free and reduced breakfast and lunch programs as a source of nutrition. When school lets out, these meals stop.

That's why FACETS, a nonprofit that works to end poverty, steps in to be a partner to parents and children to ensure more kids in need don't go through the summer isolated, lonely, and hungry. Through our youth programming, FACETS works to make summer break more fun and safer for children living at Robinson Square, Ragan Oaks, Wedgewood, and Barros Circle communities.

Staff and volunteers offer engaging activities to keep kids busy, their bodies active, and their brains working, such as swimming classes, field trips, sports and games and reading and math programs. We also serve hundreds of lunches a week to children who rely on the free and reduced lunch program during the school year.

As extensive as our efforts are, we know there are many more children that are not protected by our summer safety net. That's why we ask that people find ways to engage children in the community by donating to or volunteering for nonprofits that are helping make summer break safe and enjoyable.

By filling the summer gaps, we know that more youth will have opportunities to celebrate academic and life successes.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Claude Moore Colonial Farm: Educational Treasure

To the Editor:

Recent articles in the Washington Post and elsewhere have indicated that Claude Moore Colonial Farm, a regional educational treasure, is in danger of being shut down by the end of the year. We cannot let this happen uninvolved and unopposed. This historic farm must be preserved for the present generation and those of the future to learn about and understand early American colonial history.

Since its inception in 1972 by the National Park Service, this living history museum has portrayed family life on a poor farm family in the 1770s just prior to the Revolutionary War. It is an authentic presentation of colonial times in a natural, hands-on setting, and has educated over two million visitors in a way that is unique to other regional historic properties. Generations of students have taken field trips to the farm and have had the opportunity to enjoy and learn history in a way that no book, classroom activity, or lecture can compete with.

Leafy pathways crisscross the 70 acre grounds and lead students to tobacco and other crops growing in the fields. They pass dark-col-

ored heritage pigs, sometimes rooting in the mud, grazing live-stock, to finally reach the rustic colonial family log cabin. Interpreters in colonial dress are there to welcome all visitors. They explain how the cabin was built and used and introduce students to common household items of the past of which they are not familiar with.

The dedicated Friends of Claude Moore Colonial Farm put an 18<sup>th</sup> Century Market Fair in the spring, summer, and autumn. Merchandise of the past is sold in wooden stalls, craftsmen show off their "old" skills, reenactments take place, and food indicative of colonial times is roasted over an open fire pit and served. Colonial time in all its colorful facets comes to life in this unique environment.

Claude Moore Colonial Farm is an educational powerhouse that needs to be preserved. The

McLean Historical Society strongly urges all parties involved—especially, the National Park Service and the Friends of the Claude Moore Colonial Farm — to preserve this valuable resource for educators, students, and those looking to learn more about the roots of our social history. Its members implore you to find common ground. In this day and age more than ever, everyone needs to get outdoors. There is no better way to do this than by visiting the farm and experiencing a world far removed from the present. Do not let this unique opportunity fall by the wayside.

The McLean Historical Society suggests that you learn more about the proposed closing and if you believe the farm should be preserved, please let your voice be heard.

**Carole Herrick**, President  
McLean Historical Society

## Write

The Connection welcomes views on any public issue. The deadline for all material is noon Friday. Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers. Letters are routinely edited for libel, grammar, good taste and factual errors.  
Send to:

Letters to the Editor  
The Connection  
1606 King St.  
Alexandria VA 22314  
Call: 703-917-6444.

By e-mail: [north@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:north@connectionnewspapers.com)



# BULLETIN

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

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

**Assistance League of Northern Virginia**, a volunteer nonprofit, invites community members to join the organization to participate in its Reading Express program. Volunteers provide one-on-one tutoring to first grade students during the school year. To learn more contact VP Membership Mary Gronlund at [gronbiz@aol.com](mailto:gronbiz@aol.com) or Program Coordinator Lynn Barron at [lynnieb517@verizon.net](mailto:lynnieb517@verizon.net).

## KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

**Child turning 5 years old by Sept. 30?** If so, contact your child's school to make arrangements for kindergarten enrollment. Most schools begin getting information together now for parents of incoming kindergartners, and many host an orientation or open house. All kindergarten programs are full-day and located in FCPS elementary schools. Check your school's webpage or contact the school directly for specific enrollment information and dates of orientation or visit [www.fcps.edu/registration/kindergarten-registration](http://www.fcps.edu/registration/kindergarten-registration).

## WEDNESDAY/JUNE 6

**Grow Your Business.** 6-8 p.m. at American Prime, 1420 Spring Hill Road, McLean. Join Tysons McLean Orchestra to network with the tech, telecom, real estate and financial services execs and the professional business community at American Prime. Live music, raffles, discounted drinks tickets and a buffet. \$30 online; \$40 at the door. Visit [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com) and search "Instrumental to Business" for tickets.

**Community Meeting.** 7-9 p.m. at Westgate Elementary School, 7500 Magarity Road, Falls Church. Fairfax County DOT will host a community meeting on proposed Magarity Road Walkway improvements. The meeting will begin with time to review concept plans, followed by a formal presentation at 7:15 p.m. The new 8-foot wide sidewalk is planned for the south side of Magarity Road from Lusby Place to Peabody Drive, and also includes curb, gutter and curbed parking spaces. The walkway will allow more children to walk and bike to school safely. Visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/projects/magarity-road-sidewalk](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/projects/magarity-road-sidewalk) for more.

**MCC Board Pledge of Service.** 7:30 p.m. at McLean Community Center Temporary Administrative Offices, 6631 Old Dominion Drive, McLean. The outgoing McLean Community Center Governing Board holds its final meeting. Immediately after it concludes, the incoming 2018-2019 board holds its first meeting and elects officers. Dranesville District Supervisor John Foust will lead the board members as they take a pledge of service. Contact Sabrina Anwah at [sabrina.anwah@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:sabrina.anwah@fairfaxcounty.gov) or 703-744-9363.

## FRIDAY/JUNE 8

**Innovations in Health Care.** 8-9 a.m. at The Tower Club, 8000 Towers Crescent Drive, Suite 1700, Tysons. As part of the Democratic Business Council of Northern Virginia's monthly Signature Breakfast Series, speakers will discuss pressing issues including how health plans, employers, private sector innovators and children's health advocates are working to improve patient experience, improve health care outcomes, and expand access to coverage, including through the recent adoption of Medicaid expansion by the Virginia legislature. Visit [www.dembiz.org/june2018brkfsnm](http://www.dembiz.org/june2018brkfsnm) or email [novadembiz@gmail.com](mailto:novadembiz@gmail.com) to register.

## MONDAY/JUNE 11

**Lunch N' Life: Estate Planning.** Noon at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 2589 Chain Bridge Road, Vienna. Join the Shepherd's Center of Oakton-Vienna's (SCOV) Lunch N' Life event with guest speaker Collins Law Firm's Phillip J. Kenny, JD, CFP, an experienced estate planner. Prepayment of \$15 per person required by Wednesday June 6. No refunds. To register, call 703-281-0538. To view event flyer, visit [www.scov.org/announcements](http://www.scov.org/announcements).

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## Creature Comforts



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Can you hear that? Of course you can't. You're there and I'm here. And exactly where am I? As usual on a Saturday morning, I'm sitting at my desk, staring out my window onto to "Belly Acres" (our two acres) waiting for creative lighting to strike.

What it is that you can't hear is the sound of Chino, one of my three male, domestic shorthair cats (there are two other females making for a total of five), purring. Purring so loudly, in fact, and positioned so strategically that I can't look across to my computer screen, grab a tissue from atop my printer or press any keys on my keyboard without seeing him, touching him and/or most definitely, hearing him.

Lying on his side with his back to the computer and his front facing me, I am semi-entranced by the heave-ho of his stomach, the alertness of his ears and the occasional stare and gradual closing of his eyes. Still the purring persists.

Knowing cat behavior, as I've come to after 40-plus years of ownership/cohabitation, I've learned to appreciate their sights and sounds and signs of affection (Chino has now rolled over with his back now facing and touching me, yet another sign of affection and trust, and dare I say, love and devotion). The purring has now stopped because Chino has fallen asleep in his "rocking chair, good buddy," to invoke some old-fashioned CB-Radio-type chatter. Perhaps in Chino's serenity will I find some creative juices to flow.

If you're a cat owner/cat "understander," this behavior is as good as it gets: proximity and tolerance. Cats may not exactly come when you call them, sit on command or fetch, but they most definitely can express love. And it's in these behavioral expressions of love that us cat owners find the greatest joy and the most comfort, so long as we interpret it as such. Nor should we get mad when they exhibit contrary behavior, like ignoring you or walking away when approached or occasionally biting/scratching/clawing the hands that feed, pet and play with them. That's par and it's their course we're playing.

As an experienced "feline," I am accustomed to and mostly amused by, this behavior. It is a behavior, among many that cats exhibit where you have zero (I was going to say minimal, but let's be honest) control. Accepting that may give you a greater sense of anticipation concerning their behavior. And it's when you can correctly anticipate that behavior where you can find some real satisfaction.

Not that correctly anticipating said behavior will become a reliable part of future interactions, nevertheless; it is understanding that being equal parts right and wrong concerning their behavior – and finding humor in it, is what will make you an enlightened cat owner. It's somewhere between expecting the unexpected and accepting that being wrong twice doesn't necessarily make you right once – and appreciating the difference. It's possible that this awareness may help clarify the cat's meow. Then again ... ?

But so what? Because of their frequently inexplicable shenanigans, I am continually bemused, and as an aside, with five cats in the house full time, never alone. And it's that never being alone that I find the most comforting.

Whether it's feeding time, litter time, petting/playing/sleeping time, shopping time or veterinarian time, I am regularly engaged. Now, whether they're happy about any of it or not, I can't say for sure. Still, it gives us all something to do, someone to see – and something to hear.

Chino has now awakened from his nap. He has positioned himself so that he is laying across my writing tablet, resting almost entirely on my non-writing left hand and purring as loudly as he was at the beginning of this column. But now that I'm nearly finished, I guess he figures he can get in my way, which doesn't bother me in the least. After all, he is a cat; I wouldn't expect anything less.

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





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