In the second act of the Robinson Secondary School production of ‘Our Town,’ senior Lizzy Lawrence and freshman Andy Lawrence walk across the stage, working together on a show as the siblings.
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Small Business Saturday Defies Soaking Rain

By Mike Salmon

The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce carried on a tradition on this year’s Small Business Saturday with their “Business in the Brewery” event at the Fair Winds Brewery in Newington. According to Chamber president Nancy-jo Manney, this is the second year the Chamber held Business in the Brewery where they bring local small businesses to a place that offers good exhibit space and a built-in crowd, and locally brewed craft beer.

“Small Business Saturday is an opportunity for us to celebrate and recognize local small businesses, the backbone of our economy,” said Manney.

Flowers ‘n’ Ferns is a Chamber member from Burke that broke out the hot cider and promotional material for Small Business Saturday, but after a few hours of steady rainfall, Karen Lynn Fountain, the shop owner, headed to the event at the Fair Winds.

Nalls Produce off Beulah Street has been a family owned and operated business for more than 50 years, and honored Small Business Day with a free gift. “Our customers have supported us for decades — saved us from becoming just another housing development — and we want to say thanks,” said Valerie Nalls, the owner’s daughter who has worked there through the years. Cary Nalls started the produce stand when he was just a kid and he continues to work every day. “My children, Blake and Morgan, are now learning how to lend a hand at Nalls too, just like I did when I was a kid,” added Valerie.

Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) said that small businesses are critical to our local economy and “the biggest generators of new jobs.” Herrity supported the recent development of a county effort to support small businesses called BizEx, “which is designed to improve the zoning and permitting process,” Herrity said. The Board of Supervisors just approved a $1 million investment in Revolution, an incubator to help small technology startups.

“I have actually seen a growth in small businesses in Fairfax County from retail to IT and health care,” Herrity said.

Small Business Saturday goes back to 2010 when the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) launched an initiative to support the neighborhood mom and pop stores that have a local angle. “Small businesses provide a character to communities,” said Jack Spirakes, the public information officer for the Washington Metropolitan Area District office of the SBA. In 2017, 108 million consumers shopped at small businesses on Small Business Saturday, spending a combined $12 billion at independent neighborhood retailers and restaurants, the SBA said. Locally, SBA participates in a monthly workshop with the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority aimed at local entrepreneurs.

“It’s a chance for communities to rally around these businesses,” added Carol Wilkerson, an SBA spokesperson out of the national office in Washington, D.C.

Allstate Contributes to ‘Weekend Food for Kids’

Assistance League of Northern Virginia’s Weekend Food for Kids program was the featured volunteer service activity for the “Feed Your Future Volunteer Relay” that took place during the recent Allstate Insurance Company Regional Advisory Board conference in Washington, D.C.

Lynn Barron and Karen Amster, board members with the all-volunteer ALNV were invited to attend and speak about Assistance League’s impactful program that increases food security in three local school districts in the region. Assistance League provides bags of nonperishable food for at-risk children to take home on the weekends when school meals are not available who otherwise could be hungry.

Following the keynote presentation, the event turned competitive. Executives, regional advisory board members — exclusive agents and exclusive financial specialists from D.C., Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia — participated in a volunteer relay, packing food for hungry children.

Allstate Senior Communication Consultant Caitlyn Barron coordinated the resources and purchased the nonperishable food items to support The Allstate Foundation Helping Hands in the Community group volunteer event. A team of more than 40 volunteers packed 500+ bags of food for at-risk children whose families struggle to put food on the table on weekends when school meals are not available.

This partnership provided an opportunity to satisfy an immediate need for food assistance at two Title I elementary schools not currently supported by the Weekend Food for Kids program. See www.assistanceleague.org/northern-virginia/
In 1799, a 17-pound nugget of gold was found near Charlotte, N.C., starting the lesser known East Coast Gold Rush, that spread into Virginia. As the years passed, and gold coins were produced in Charlotte, the east coast gold belt that stretched from the Harpers Ferry area to the Piedmont died down and all talk of gold went to California.

This was a topic of discussion of Mike Johnson’s recent lecture titled “Prehistory of Gold (Au) in Northern Virginia,” Burke Historical Society sponsored at the Pohick Library. Johnson, a former Fairfax County archeologist, offered geological and archeological data and displayed a vial of gold dust that he found in Northern Virginia over the past year. “This is all year, at least once a week,” Johnson said, holding up the glass vial. “That took a lot of work,” he added.

On the title page, there was an arrowhead he found, with a penny and a little pile of gold dust, just to show a size comparison, and show how panning for gold in Northern Virginia should only be a hobby.

There was a nugget found more recently that weighs two ounces, but it’s another rarity and is more valuable to show off than it is to melt down and sell. “That piece is priceless,” said Scott Sprague, a member of the east coast chapter of a prospecting with roots in California. “It’s not about money.”

Johnson’s presentation started with the geologic process to make gold, and evolved into a period 18,000 years ago when the Chesapeake Bay was created, the Bering Land Bridge, the Clovis points and Paleo America. “Five thousand years ago, at least in this area, there were foragers,” Johnson said. A cave drawing of sorts called the Sibby’s Rock pictograph was found at Great Falls in recent years and is now on display in the Great Falls Visitors Center.

The attendees wanted to know about gold around here though, and when talking gold, the hot spots are a big secret – similar to fishing. Around here, most of the land is owned by the government or private individuals so hunting for gold or panning or gold is not allowed.

“There aren’t many places, you’re going to have to get permission,” Johnson said. “One of the rules is, you don’t reveal your source,” he added.

Someone in the audience brought up the Burke Gold Mine, which Johnson wasn’t familiar with but another person did know that it was about 200 yards from Pohick Creek. There were a few whispers, but the topic quickly changed. Fountainhead Park is in the gold belt, Johnson said, and noted that this was determined from a micro speck of gold he found there.
Burke Student Earns American Heritage Girls Award

Theresa M. Morthland of Burke earned the Stars & Stripes Award, the highest recognition that American Heritage Girls offers to girl members. The award requires a great deal of time, sacrifice and devotion to achieve.

In addition to living out the American Heritage Girls creed and oath, award recipients complete a number of requirements, including earning a total of 16 merit badges; holding a leadership position in their troop for a minimum of six months; planning, developing and providing leadership to others in a service project lasting more than 100 hours; writing a life ambition/spiritual walk essay and résumé; and passing a Board of Review.

Morthland chose to serve the Church of the Nativity Catholic School by designing and building an elevated sandbox with an innovative design so preschool children in wheelchairs and children with tactile difficulties can play in the sand with their friends. The sandbox has become a focal point in the playground and with multiple classes of children. She worked with multiple schools before actual construction, making presentations to each administration to seek approval. She also made a presentation to the parish’s Knights of Columbus Council 7992 seeking and ultimately receiving their financial support to complete the project.

Morthland served as the troop’s Senior Troop Leader, Closet Coordinator, and earned multiple awards, such as, the Harriet Tubman Level Award, Dolley Madison Level Award, and the Mary, the First Disciple Religious Medal.

A member of Immanuel Bible Church’s American Heritage Girls Troop VA1115, Morthland is the 448th girl nationally — and the 37th girl in Virginia — to earn the Stars & Stripes Award. She will be recognized in a court-of-honor ceremony at 7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 17, at Immanuel Bible Church in Annandale.

She is the daughter of Sam and Michele Morthland of Burke and the family attends the Church of the Nativity Catholic Church in Burke. She graduated Lake Braddock Secondary School in June where she was active in the Color Guard. She currently attends West Virginia University as a Freshman in Forensics Biology. She was recognized by the college with both academic and leadership scholarships.

American Heritage Girls Inc. is a national character-development organization for girls ages 5 to 18 that embraces Christian values and encourages family involvement. For more information, go to www.americanheritagegirls.org.
OPINION

Call for Children's Connection 2018

Get creative and send art, poetry and more.

During the last week of each year, this newspaper devotes its pages to the creativity of local students and children. The annual Children’s Connection (including Children’s Gazette, Children’s Almanac and Children’s Centre View) is a tradition of well over a decade. We welcome contributions from public and private schools, art classes, individuals and homeschoolers. We publish artwork, poetry, essays, creative writing, opinion pieces, short stories, photography, photos of sculpture or gardens or other creative efforts.

We ask that all submissions be digital so they can be sent through email or delivered on flash drive. Writing should be submitted in text format. Artwork should be photographed or scanned and provided in jpeg format. Some suggestions:
- Drawings or paintings or photographs of your family, friends, pets or some favorite activity. These should be photographed or scanned and submitted in jpeg format. Photos of sculpture or larger art projects are also welcome.
- Short answers (50 to 100 words) to some of the following questions: If you could give your parents, family or friends any gift that didn’t cost money what would that gift be? What are you most looking forward to in the upcoming year? What do you want to be when you grow up? What is your favorite animal? What is your favorite toy? What makes a good friend?
- Your opinion (50 to 100 words) about traffic, sports, restaurants, video games, toys, trends, politics, etc.
- Poetry or other creative writing.
- News stories from school newspapers.
- Photos and text about activities or events. To be published, we must have the full first and last name of the student, artwork writer.
- Identify each piece of writing or art, including the student’s full name, age, grade and town of residence, plus the name of the school, name of teacher and town of school location. Home schoolers’ contributions are welcomed.

To send flash drives containing artwork and typed, electronic submissions, mark them clearly by school and hometown and mail the flash drive to: Children’s Connection (including Children’s Gazette, Children’s Almanac and Children’s Centre View), 1606 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. Please send all submissions by Monday, Dec. 3, 2018. The Children’s Edition will publish the last week of 2018.

You can see last year’s editions by visiting www.connectionnewspapers.com/PDFs/ and scroll down to Children’s Edition.

Email submissions for the Children’s Edition to the following editors:
For Burke, Clifton, Fairfax, Fairfax Station, Great Falls, Herndon, Lorton, McLean, Reston, or Springfield, email to Kemal Kurspahic at kmal@connectionnewspapers.com.
For Arlington, Potomac, CentreView, Chantilly, Alexandria and Mount Vernon, email to Steven Mauren, smauren@connectionnewspapers.com.

EDITORIAL

Bringing People in from the Cold

This year 36 churches will be host sites for the hypothermia program.

By Joe Fay
Executive Director, FACETS

Fifteen years ago, two Fairfax men froze to death during the fall. At the time, FACETS was a nonprofit that was primarily serving meals to the county’s homeless in partnership with several churches. FACETS’ leaders knew that feeding people only to send them back into the extreme cold was not a great answer for the growing number of people who were homeless in the community.

That winter FACETS responded by offering temporary shelter in conjunction with its partner churches, the Lamb Center, and Salvation Army to get people in from the cold. The first year, these hypothermia shelters rotated to several different churches and only opened when the temperatures dropped below freezing. Soon the centers were serving up to 60 people on cold nights.

The program has evolved as the region’s population has grown. In 2006, FACETS worked on policies and procedures with the county and formally began managing central Fairfax’s Hypothermia Prevention and Response Program. This year 36 churches will be host sites for the program with more than 50 churches and other faith communities providing volunteers.

These faith community partners rotate when opening their doors to provide shelter. In anticipation, churches and temples are preparing their facilities to welcome people in need during the cold months ahead — cleaning, getting supplies, and preparing the space. Other volunteers are planning menus. Unique partnerships have formed as a result of the program as Christians, Muslims, Jews, and more join together to help the homeless and in the process learn about each other.

The effort also matured beyond just providing safe haven. Guests now receive life-changing care management. By interacting with guests at the shelters, FACETS’ case managers are able to address their needs in a very personal way by gaining their trust and connecting them with housing solutions and critical services. They also receive a variety of services from the county.

Last year 283 guests were given shelter from the biting cold. More than 3,800 people volunteered 33,000 hours last season to care for these guests who are homeless. By the end of season, 41 of these people had left homelessness behind and were housed.

This year’s Hypothermia Response and Prevention Program began the Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend and runs seven nights a week through April 1. With the projected cold and forecasts of a very snowy winter season, demand is expected to grow.

To learn more, donate or volunteer, visit us at www.FACETSCares.org.

FACETS is a Fairfax-based nonprofit working to prevent and end homelessness.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Protecting Our Diversity

To the Editor:

I want to thank you for publishing the article about the Fairfax For All coalition’s recent activities (“Advocating for Immigrant Protection”). As the daughter of two immigrants, immigration policy has always been important to me — especially as the debate over deportation and ICE has escalated. My parents were fortunate enough to be able to immigrate legally, and have been citizens for about 10 years, but in examining the data I’ve come to see that that’s most likely to do with the fact that they are white and had college degrees. Our town is so beautifully diverse, and I believe that we’re losing an important part of our culture when immigrants are scared to participate in the community for fear of deportation.

If what Fairfax For All says is true, then there is an entire group of people in our town who are being excluded from important decisions, prevented from seeking medical attention, and afraid to participate in the community — all out of fear. I’m learning just how important these relationships to the community, or social ties, are. They allow individuals a sense of purpose and help them to feel assimilated into this community that we like to profess as being so diverse.

Emma Steinhobel
Herdon
Holiday Entertainment

Holiday Story of Redemption and Love

Providence Players present Rob Zapple’s adaptation of ‘A Christmas Carol.’

By David Siegel
The Connection

For its Holiday Season production, the Providence Players are presenting a special adaptation of Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol” with an American Depression era setting. The Rob Zapple adaptation is directed by Beth Giles-Whitehead. She cast more than two dozen actors to bring the show to vivid life along with live Bluegrass music.

Zapple’s “A Christmas Carol” is set during a bitter cold December 1933, in a down-on-its-fortunes St. Louis neighborhood. Times are hard. People are out of work and have lost hope. An unemployed Shakespearean actor and his manager run out of gas. The townsfolk agree to supply them with gas if they tell them the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim.

“The story of Ebenezer Scrooge’s redemption and turn to love and service for others will always need to be heard no matter how many Christmas seasons come and go,” said Barbara Gilles-Whitehead, Providence Players director. “Our production will provide audiences the opportunity to see this familiar story through a different lens.”

Tiny Tim is played by Caden Mitchell (Mantua Elementary School), who said: “Tiny Tim is a really giving boy who wants to help everyone around him, even though he is one that needs help himself, due to his illness and disability. I like how much he loves everyone and they love him.”

Talia Cutler (Kilmer Middle School) plays the Ghost of Christmas Past. “The ghost of Christmas Past has immense power and magic. She is a very different character than what I normally play,” Talia said.

Bob Cratchit is portrayed by Daniel Lavanga: “Cratchit is so utterly devoted to his family. He would do anything for them, including putting up with Scrooge’s abuse day in and day out. And yet he is not a bitter man.” Roxanne Waite plays Mrs. Cratchit: “The moral of the importance of putting other people above material trappings, the power of interpersonal relationship, and redemption are timeless. It’s important to be reminded of such themes and we can always use a good dose of it.”

Ebenezer Scrooge is played by David Whitehead, who said: “I love the change that Ebenezer takes from coldness and disdain to compassion and gratitude. There is no other story like it, it lifts my spirits just playing it.”

The Providence Players production of Zapple’s “A Christmas Carol” will remind audiences that even during the most desperate of times, there is hope with community and family to help shelter you.

Where and When

Providence Players present the Rob Zapple adaptation of Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol” at The James Lee Community Center Theater, 2855 Annandale Road, Falls Church. Performances: Dec. 7 to Dec. 15, 2018. Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. with Saturday and Sunday Matinees at 2 p.m. on December 8, 9, 15 & 16. Tickets $17; seating is General Admission. Call 703-425-6782 or visit www.providenceplayers.org

Note: This production will benefit the work of The Young Hearts, a group of teens who raise funds to battle blood cancers and other diseases. Half of all net proceeds from this production will be donated to Young Hearts Foundation in pursuit of their mission. This year, The Young Hearts are raising money in support of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

By Rob Cuevas/Courtesy Providence Players

Photo courtesy Providence Players
The dancers of Encore Theatrical Arts Project are kicking up their heels with glee, getting ready for their upcoming, holiday extravaganza, “An Invitation to Christmas.” The show runs Dec. 7-16 in the Richard Ernst Theater at NOVA’s Annandale campus.

In the story, the elves at the North Pole are super-busy with so much work to do that they need extra help. So they send out invitations to children selected by Santa to attend Elf-Training School. However, one of the new recruits is a full-grown man, and his classmates wonder why he’s there. He does, too, since he thought he was going on a job interview.

The cast of 24 dancers, plus adult guest performers Jack Stein and Allen McRae, have been rehearsing since August, and Director/Choreographer Raynor van der Merve says things are coming along really well. “We had our first, dress rehearsal and, suddenly, the characters came to life,” she said. “And many of the performers are triple threats — dancing, singing and acting.”

“Besides being a visual feast for the eyes, the show is uplifting — from the story to the music,” she continued. “We have lots of new numbers, plus some old favorites. I look for music that might be familiar, but not something people will hear over the radio. So I choose songs that move the story forward, put people in the holiday spirit and let them escape this busy season for two hours.”

The scenes take place in New York City, Santa’s workshop at the North Pole and outdoors in a snow-covered, winter wonderland. And van der Merve describes the costumes as both “colorful and glamorous.”

“Everybody’s working hard and has clicked really well,” she said. “It’s a great unity and, when everything comes together, it’s magic. And that’s what I love about theater — the community of it. No one does it on their own; the script, choreography, sets and lighting are among the puzzle pieces.

Encore presents holiday show, “An Invitation to Christmas.”

**By Bonnie Hobbs**

**To Go**

Show times are: Dec. 7 at 7:30 p.m.; Dec. 8 at noon, 4 and 7:30 p.m.; Dec. 9 at noon and 4 p.m.; Dec. 14 at 7:30 p.m.; Dec. 15 at noon, 4 and 7:30 p.m.; and Dec. 16 at noon and 4 p.m. Tickets range from $19-$26 via www.encore-tap.org or 703-222-5511.

Location: Richard Ernst Theater, NOVA campus, 8333 Little River Turnpike in Annandale.

See Encore, Page 14
41st Annual Holiday Arts & Craft Show

Audrey Moore Recreation Center
Saturday December 1st
(9:00am-4:00pm)

Sunday December 2nd
(10:00am-3:30pm)

Experience One Of Northern Virginia’s Longest Running Arts And Crafts Show With Plenty Of Great Gifts To Choose From. Top-Quality Handmade Arts And Crafts Will Be Offered By Nearly 100 Of The Area’s Finest Artisans.

Admission Is $2 Per Person
Children Ages 12 And Under Are Free.
Door Prizes Will Be Awarded.

Audrey Moore Recenter Is Located At 8100 Braddock Rd, Annandale.
For More Info Or Reasonable Ada Accommodations, Call 703-321-7081.

Multiple Santa Clauses will entertain during Encore’s upcoming Christmas show.

Encore’s dancers always perform a Rockettes-themed number during their shows.

Photos Courtesy of Linda Helms Photography
BalletNova Presents The Nutcracker
BalletNova’s Nutcracker honours the traditional. BalletNova presents a brand-new production of the holiday classic with new costumes, new characters and new choreography. The Sugar Plum Fairy is being danced by Willa Franz, of Fairfax. $18-$82. Call 703-777-3008 or visit BalletNova.org for more.

THURSDAY/NOV 29-DEC. 1 Holiday Booking Sale. Thursday, 3-9 p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. By Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerse St., Springfield. More than 10,000 like new books in all categories, most at $2 or less, plus loads of CDs, DVDs and special gift offerings. Over 3,000 children’s books, too. Funds raised will pay for our children’s programs and more. Free admission. Email rlbfriends@gmail.com or call 703-851-4005.

FRIDAY/NOV 30-SATURDAY/DEC. 1 The Pajama Game. Friday, 7 p.m.; Saturday, 2 and 7 p.m. at Falls Church High School, 7521 Jaguar Trail, Falls Church. A musical based on the 1953 novel “The Pajama Game,” written by Clifford Odets. $10. For more information, call 703-875-3008 or visit www.fchsdrama.org/events/408638.html.

SATURDAY/DEC. 1 Holiday Extravaganza. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at South County High School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Lorton. Santa arrives at 8:30 a.m. courtesy of the Lorton Volunteer Fire Department kicking off the Candy Cane Kids Fun Run for kids age 12 and under. At 9 a.m., 170 vendors featuring all sorts of handcrafted items will offer everything from handmade glass ornaments and jewelry to soaps, lotions, clothing, and holiday décor. Cookies with Santa, free, 9:30-12; FairFax Co Sheriff, Child ID and fingerprinting, free, 9-3; Santa’s Book Emporium, 9-3: Proceeds benefit the ICHS All Night Grad Party, PTSO, Band Boosters and Athletic Boosters. Free, $3. Visit www.southcountyptso.org.

BalletNova presents The Nutcracker. Friday, 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, 1 and 5 p.m.; Sunday, 1 and 5 p.m. at George Mason High School Theatre, 7124 Lusby Pike, Falls Church. BalletNova’s Nutcracker has become a holiday tradition. BalletNova presents a brand-new production of the holiday classic with new costumes, new characters and new choreography. The Sugar Plum Fairy is being danced by Willa Franz, of Fairfax. $18-$82. Call 703-777-3008 or visit BalletNova.org for more.

THURSDAY/NOV 29 General Workshop. 6-30-9 p.m. at Police Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Anna Maria Fitzhugh Chapter, DAR, presents a workshop at the Genealogy Workshop. Prospective DAR members will have the opportunity to receive instruction and assistance with the application process. Contact 703-690-7716 for more.

THURSDAY/NOV 29-DEC. 2 BalletNova presents The Nutcracker. Friday, 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, 1 and 5 p.m.; Sunday, 1 and 5 p.m. at George Mason High School Theatre, 7124 Lusby Pike, Falls Church. BalletNova’s Nutcracker has become a holiday tradition. BalletNova presents a brand-new production of the holiday classic with new costumes, new characters and new choreography. The Sugar Plum Fairy is being danced by Willa Franz, of Fairfax. $18-$82. Call 703-777-3008 or visit BalletNova.org for more.

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THURSDAY/NOV 29-DEC. 1 Holiday Arts and Crafts Show. Saturday, 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at Audrey Moore Recreation Center, 8100 Braddock Road, Annandale. One of Northern Virginia’s longest running arts and crafts shows presents a brand-new event with new vendors, new displays and spaces by four resident artists in vacant retail space. Free. directorm@caireinc.org or visit www.caireinc.org.

FRIDAY/DEC. 7 Holiday Benefit Concert. 7-30-9 p.m. at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, 2961 Leesburg Pike, Reston. Celebrate the holiday season with candlelight and carols with handbells. Featuring Karen Ashbrook and friends Paul Oertl, Elaine Frantz and Karen Oertl. Free admission. All donations will go to Fairfax Area Community Emergency and Transitional Services (FACES) and Ecumenical Community Helping Others (ECHOCORP). For more information or to volunteer, call 703-704-2297. A free admission will be offered by 100 of the area’s finest artisans. Admission is $2 per person; children ages 12 and under are free. Door prizes. Call 703-321-7081.

SUNDAY/DEC. 2 Christmas Musical: “Here Comes Heaven.” 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. at Falls Church United Church of Christ, 4650 Shirley Gare Road, Fairfax. FeaturingQuest Singers in three holiday music programs, opening this festive season. Tickets not required. Free. $40., $42.5 Reserved, $78.50 VIP. Visit www.TheConcertSpot.com or call 703-978-408638.html.

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THURSDAY/NOV 29-DEC. 1 Holiday Arts and Crafts Show. Saturday, 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at Audrey Moore Recreation Center, 8100 Braddock Road, Annandale. One of Northern Virginia’s longest running arts and crafts shows presents a brand-new event with new vendors, new displays and spaces by four resident artists in vacant retail space. Free. directorm@caireinc.org or visit www.caireinc.org.

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HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT

Stan the Stallion and Santa get ready to run a previous Candy Cane Kids’ Fun Run.

Holiday Extravaganza

Santa arrives at 8:30 a.m. courtesy of the Lorton Volunteer Fire Department kicking off the Candy Cane Kids Fun Run for kids age 12 and under. At 9 a.m., 170 vendors featuring all sorts of handcrafted items will offer everything from handmade glass ornaments and jewelry to soaps, lotions, clothing, and holiday decor. Cookies with Santa, free, 9:30-12, Fairfax Co Sheriff, Child ID and fingerprinting, free, 9-3; Santa’s Book Emporium, 9-3. Proceeds benefit the SCHS All Night Grad Party, PTSO, Band Boosters and Athletic Boosters. Saturday, Dec. 1, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at South County High School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Lorton. Free, $3. Visit www.schschool.org.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 26

Holiday Concert, 6-7:30 p.m. at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 2700 F St. NW, Washington, D.C. Featuring local Encore Chorale groups from Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, and Reston. Encore Creativity for Older Adults, the nation’s largest choral program for singers 55+, will present the combined talents of more than 250 Encore Chorales and Encore ROCKS singers in concert. Free, the public is invited and no tickets are required. Call 301-261-5747 or visit www.encorecreativity.org for more.

THURSDAY-SATURDAY/DEC. 27-29

The Nutcracker, 2 and 7 p.m. at the Ernst Community Cultural Center Theater. Virginia Ballet Company and School will present its 68th season of the classic Nutcracker ballet. $30 for adults, $20 for children, students and seniors at www.vaballet.org. A limited number of general admission tickets is available for the Working Stage Rehearsal on Dec. 26 at 6:30 p.m. ($10) at www.vaballet.org. The tickets for the Working Stage Rehearsal must be purchased in advance.
Schools

Welcoming New Drama Teacher to ‘Our Town’

Robinson Secondary welcomes new drama teacher and opens the season with Thornton Wilder’s ‘Our Town.’

The students of Robinson Secondary School welcomed the new drama teacher and are enjoying working with her on their fall production, Thornton Wilder’s “Our Town.”

Rambunctious Theatre Company presented the classic play during the second weekend of November. “Our Town” guides the audience through the town of Grover’s Corners and the lives of the people in the town; following the lives of George Gibbs, played by senior Nico Ochoa, and Emily Webb, played by senior Erin Reno. With a cast of 23 students from Robinson Secondary and 60+ tech members, the students have worked tirelessly over the course of three months to prepare for four shows over the course of the second weekend in November. From the makeup crew to the actors, each student has contributed a vital aspect to the show. Everything was student designed from the poster design to the set. The sound design was performed live with a sound crew creating the noises in real time with the show.

“There is a connection to every single person who watches it and it really makes you think about how precious life is,” says assistant director Zachary Foley, who is a senior at Robinson. “It really makes you think about how you can live your life to the fullest.” Zachary has worked alongside director Madeline Marshall.

As her character joins in conversation with her father, senior Erin Reno and senior Cole Terra at Robinson Secondary enjoy their last fall play together of their high school career.

In the second act, senior Lizzy Lawrence and freshman Andy Lawrence walk across stage together, working together on a show as the siblings.

See ‘Our Town’. Page 13
Recalling lines in a vital scene between their characters in which they flashback to when their characters realized they were “meant to be,” seniors Nico Ochoa and Erin Reno participate as the leads in ‘Our Town.’

‘Our Town’

From Page 12

throughout the whole process, in order to gain an understanding of what he would like to pursue in his future. Marshall is the new high school drama teacher at Robinson Secondary and is thrilled to start off the season with this play. “It has been an absolute joy to be able to begin working with the incredible students of Rambunctious Theatre Company. There is always a measure of intimidation when producing a show as well-known as ‘Our Town,’” there are so many schools of thought on Wilder’s iconic piece. What truly impressed me was the brilliant creativity and thoughtfulness of all the students involved, both on and off-stage.” said Marshall.

“They have brought so much heart and hard work to the play, which has made my job as their new teacher so much fun. Every day they impress me more and more, and have made me feel warmly welcome in the Robinson family.”

With an upcoming season of “Almost, Maine,” “Mary Poppins,” and more, Marshall has a full season of shows with her students ahead and is thankful for the experience of working on “Our Town” to get to know her students.

‘Our Town’

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Encore Presents Holiday Show

that must fall into place to make something unique and special. And with a live audience, each performance is different."

Chantilly High sophomore Kate Persell portrays Jingles the elf, who supervises the children who’ve been invited to become elves. “She’s really cute, but likes to stay organized,” said Persell. “She’s friendly with the kids, but snarky with the adult trainee. I enjoy acting, and it’s fun to play someone different from my own personality.”

She’s danced with Encore since third grade and loves the many, different styles of dance. “I can get my energy out, it’s a good form of exercise and I do it with all my favorite people,” she said. Persell’s favorite dance is the “Once-A-Year Day” number. “All the elves are doing a hectic dance, running around like crazy, getting ready for Christmas,” she said.

“There’s no resting point, and I love rushing with adrenaline, the whole time. And when we do the final pose, it feels so good.”

Persell said the audience will enjoy the storyline because “It’s humorous, with the businessman in an elf costume that doesn’t fit him. The children in the cast are super-cute and talented, and the dance numbers are spectacular."

High-schooler Bea Tremblay dances in the ensemble and portrays a mail carrier. “She delivers the invitations to the kids, as well as to the adult, George Parker,” said Tremblay. “She’s undercover from the North Pole, so she’s in New York street clothes. I wear a U.S. Postal Service hoodie and hat, plus gray slacks. She’s a little mischievous and jolly because she knows she’s handing out invitations to a magical experience.”

Tremblay enjoys taking her character in a humorous direction and working with the other actors and dancers. She especially likes the “Santas” number. “We wear big bellies, wigs, hats, boots and Santa costumes,” she said. “It’s a high-energy dance, and 26 of us are onstage; and it’s so much fun that I’m smiling the whole time.”

She’s danced with Encore since age 10 and is in her fourth year with Encore’s performing company. “The company creates a community, and the other girls and I support each other and have formed a family,” said Tremblay. “And it’s so nice dancing together without having to compete. We can concentrate on the art and performance quality.”

Calling the show “fun-loving and happy,” she said, “We have lots of little kids acting, too, and they’re really doing a great job. We’ve got bright and beautiful costumes, and the set puts you in the Christmas spirit as soon as you see it. We also have cool props, neat vocal numbers and a lot of actors who make it what it is.”

High-schooler Becca Perron plays Digits the elf. “She works in the mailroom and is very serious,” said Perron. “She doesn’t like her supervisor, Dally, because she bosses her around. Digits also thinks Dally is lazy and she should have her job. She’s fun to play because she’s not like me, and being an elf is just the best time. I get to be over-the-top and really let myself go.”

It’s Perron’s ninth year with Encore and sixth with its performing company. She likes the “Rag Dolls” number because, she said, “We get to make really funny faces and expressions as Raggedy Anns and Andys. And we especially like it when the kids in the audience laugh.”

“As a group, we put so much passion and love into our shows,” she continued. “So when we see a big audience, it’s just the greatest feeling. We’re well-known for our professional sets and performances that set us apart from other dance groups.”

High-schooler Faith Chun plays Cookie. “She loves baking treats and has an energetic personality,” said Chun. “She gets excited after making cookies and other baked goods, but is disappointed when they’re all gone. It’s fun playing her because of her energy, and I’m sometimes that way, too.”

Chun’s favorite dance is “Rag Dolls,” during which the dancers wear white leotards with white fluff in back and have their hair in high ponytails. “I like that style of dance, with the kickline, and the number has both fast and slow parts,” she said. “We have sharp poses, so we have to really be in sync.”

Dancing since age 3, it’s her seventh year with Encore. “Dancing is always my passion,” said Chun. “It makes me happy and is my favorite thing to do. It takes me away from my stress and schoolwork, and I really enjoy doing it.” Regarding the show, she said audiences will like “the storyline and the dance styles. It will allow them to connect to Christmas in a different way and is enjoyable to watch.”
HOLIDAY DONATIONS
Blanket and Coat Drive. Through Dec. 14. Organized by NOVA Relief Center. Blankets and coats will be sent to refugees in three camps in Jordan this winter. Blankets and coats should be or gently worn. Monetary donations are also needed and may be made to NOVA Relief Center online and at some drop-off locations. For drop-off sites or to make a tax-deductible donation, visit www.novarelief.org.

Holiday Basket Donation. Christmas baskets by Kids in Need Education Project. Chrismas wishes will be held at Franconia Church of the Brethren. The toys will be delivered throughout the holidays in conjunction with local charities that assist children in need. To find a local office, go to www.koinoniacares.org.

Toys for Tots Drive. Organized by NOVA Relief Center. Toys for Tots will collect new, unwrapped toys for Toys for Tots Donations. \( \text{Toys for Tots Donations. Nov. 28-Dec. 8 at Sheehy Ford of Springfield, 6727 Loisdale Road, Springfield.} \)

Christmas Wish Donations and Volunteers. Koinonia is now accepting donations of unwrapped Christmas gifts so that their clients can pick up gifts for their families. This year, Koinonia wishes will be held at Franconia United Methodist Church from Nov. 1-30. Donations will be accepted through Dec. 10. Visit www.koinoniacares.org for a list of suggested toys and gift cards. Volunteers needed Dec. 9-12. Call 703-971-1991.

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