

Springfield CONNECTION

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HomeLifeStyle
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Three-time Guinness World Record holder Ujjwal Sharma Thakuri of Springfield does a Van Dam style split in his living room.

Springfield Cab Driver Holds 3 Guinness World Records

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Parkway Widening Crosses Another Hurdle

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Education, ERA, \$15 Minimum Wage

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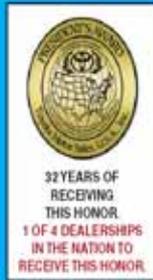
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Education Issues Take Center Stage

Constituents tell lawmakers to increase teacher pay; pass ERA, \$15 minimum wage and more.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

Teachers deserve a pay raise, and Virginia desperately needs to hire more school counselors. These were two of the most prevalent concerns voiced by constituents to members of the Fairfax County legislative delegation, the largest in the Virginia General Assembly.

During a marathon public hearing at the Fairfax County Government Center last weekend, lawmakers heard about everything from raising the minimum wage to reducing restrictions on solar power. But it was the coordinated push for education funding that remained a common theme, as one speaker after the next called on members of the House of Delegates and state Senate to invest an expected windfall of new revenue into the classroom.

“K-12 funding is again our top priority for this legislative session,” said Fairfax Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova, speaking at her last public hearing before stepping down at the end of 2019 from a position she’s held since 2009. “We have over 55,000 students receiving free-or reduced price lunch, over 36,000 students learning English as a second language and over 26,000 students receiving special education services. We need adequate funding to provide services for these higher need students.”

Gov. Ralph Northam has signaled that education funding will be one of his top priorities this year too, a move largely prompted by a \$300 million windfall of new revenue from the Trump tax cuts. Because changes at the federal level create new incentives for high-income earners to take a standard deduction rather than itemizing, that means more state tax filers will be taking a standard deduction rather than itemizing — creating a new pot of money for lawmakers to spend. At the top of the agenda is a 5 percent raise for Virginia teachers.

“Obviously the governor’s budget seeks to retain the best educator workforce,” said Melanie Meren, a candidate for the Hunter Mill District on the Fairfax County School Board. “And that means pay increases for teachers.”

AFTER THE PARKLAND shooting last year, Republican leaders in the House created a select committee on school safety to come up with recommendations to increase school safety. The group did not consider any new firearm restrictions, choosing instead to look at hardening school facilities and creating a new tip line allowing students to alert authorities about potential problems. One of the key recom-



Speaking at her last legislative public hearing as chairman of the Board of Supervisors, Sharon Bulova told lawmakers her top priority is funding for schools.



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL LEE POPE/THE CONNECTION

SEIU512 President David Broder asked lawmakers to support raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and ensuring workers have access to paid family leave.

“The truth is that many working people across our community are struggling.”

— David Broder, president SEIU 512

mendations of the committee is reducing administrative duties of school counselors, freeing them up from duties like administering standardized tests. The committee did not recommend hiring any new school counselors though, even though Virginia falls far short of the recommended ratio of one counselor for every 250 students. That would cost about \$86 million, and Northam has a three-year plan to start moving toward that goal by spending \$36 million this year.

“Governor Northam recently said that our school counselors are the ears of the education system,” said Laura Jane Cohn, a candidate for the Springfield District of the Fairfax County School Board. “They are indeed the ears that hear about bullying and trouble at home.”

Specifics of one of the governor’s budget proposal that is troubling school officials here is to increase funding for a pool of money known as the “at-risk add-on,” a way to increase funding for school divisions with a high percentage of students who live in poverty. Although Fairfax County has 55,000 students who qualify for free or reduced price lunch, that’s only 29 percent of the student population — far below the statewide average of 41 percent. So the governor’s plan to add \$35 million to the at-risk add-on would not benefit Fairfax County.

“Because the at-risk add-on is based on division-wide percentages of poverty rather than our actual numbers of eligible students, Fairfax is disadvantaged by its overall size,” said School Board Chairwoman Karen Corbett Sanders.

HELPING LOW-WAGE workers was an-

other theme to emerge from the five-hour hearing. Several speakers from the Service Employees International Union 512 spoke about raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, ensuring workers have access to paid family leave and removing what they see as unnecessary restrictions on workers who want to unionize. They also spoke in favor of making the Earned Income Tax fully refundable. Virginia is one of the few states that does not make its earned income tax credit refundable, which harms families earning less than \$50,000 a year.

“The truth is that many working people across our community are struggling,” said David Broder, president of SEIU512. “The fastest growing jobs are often low-wage and lack basic benefits such as health care, paid leave and retirement plans.”

Carpenter Jose Frias appeared before lawmakers to urge them to take action against wage theft. Virginia is one of the few states that does not allow workers who are victims of wage theft to receive lawyers fees, which harms low-wage workers who would otherwise have no way to pay for a lawyer. Maryland allows for triple damages, and D.C. allows quadruple damages plus legal fees. But in Virginia, people who have not received all the money coming to them have a hard time finding a lawyer willing to work for free.

“Pass laws that give us the right to private cause of action,” said Frias. “We need these tools to defend our jobs and provide for our families.”

SEVERAL SPEAKERS urged lawmakers to scale back recently passed restrictions on homeowners who rent out their

houses short term through services like Airbnb.

Other speakers called for instituting universal background checks for people who purchase weapons at gun shows.

A handful of people arrived at the government center to ask lawmakers to “close the puppy mill loophole,” a legislative effort to create new restrictions on businesses that sell animals.

One speaker urged lawmakers to reject efforts to fork over up to \$1.1 billion worth of incentives to Amazon.

“This deal was conducted without any public input, and so this deal has no mandate,” said Helen Li, a Fairfax County resident who is part of a group known as For Us Not Amazon. “Please fight for a fair process instead of rubber-stamping a secret business deal that was made without Virginia residents in mind.”

Lawmakers also heard from several speakers on both sides of the Equal Rights Amendment. After Illinois became the 37th state to pass the ERA last year, advocates for and against started targeting Virginia as the potential 38th state — the magic number needed to put the ERA over the top and add it to the Constitution.

Arthur Purves of the Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance raised concerns that the ERA might “make men’s and women’s bathrooms unconstitutional.” Many more speakers, though, said it was long past time for Virginia to join the other states that have approved the amendment.

“We have a historic opportunity this year to ratify the ERA and get it passed and include women in the Constitution of the United States as equal,” said Shyamali Hauth, a veteran who is active in Democratic politics. “I ask you to do the right thing and ensure equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex — those are the exact words of the Equal Rights Amendment.”

OPINION

Wish List

Things this session of the General Assembly, beginning Jan. 9., could/should accomplish.

Before this session, every year for the better part of a decade, the most profound wish for the Virginia General Assembly session was the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, which could provide healthcare to as many as 400,000 poor Virginians who otherwise were living without coverage. Partisan obstruction prevented those people from gaining coverage for many years.

COMMENTARY

But coverage began this month for 200,000 new enrollees after Medicaid expansion came to Virginia in the last session. It arrived with the November 2017 election and Democrats taking 15 additional seats in Virginia's House of Delegates. The prospect for more awaits in this November's election with all seats in the General Assembly, both the House of Delegates and the Senate, on the ballot.

So we'll begin this year's wish list with gratitude that the entire Commonwealth, including the economy, will be healthier for provid-

ing healthcare to the previously uninsured. And a wish that we not complicate the coverage with work reporting requirements. Please.

So in the new era of new hope for action in the General Assembly, here are some (not so modest) wishes for this session, acknowledging that some may wait another year for serious consideration.

❖ Establish a nonpartisan redistricting commission. This is urgent, as the General Assembly would have to act in this session to get a constitutional amendment on the ballot in time for a commission to be ready for redistricting after the 2020 census.

❖ Greater transparency everywhere. Move to allow fewer, not more, FOIA exemptions. Require that a reason be given for any FOIA denial.

❖ End suspension of driver's licenses for non-payment of court costs and fines.

❖ Pass the Equal Rights Amendment.

❖ Equal rights for LGBT Virginians.

❖ Fund Community Services Board budgets. Expand Medicaid waivers; clear the waiting list.

❖ Fund education fairly, Northern Virginia needs more help.

❖ Restrict predatory lending.

❖ Think about reform and civil rights when considering votes on law enforcement.

❖ Involve local officials in fixing proffer regulation.

❖ Implement no-excuse absentee voting.

❖ Limit large campaign contributions.

❖ Prohibit personal use of campaign funds.

❖ Require reporting on solitary confinement.

❖ Push jails and prisons to adopt best practices for prisoners with mental health issues.

❖ Provide a tax credit for family caregivers, with income limits if needed.

Comments? Additions? Email editors@connectionnewspapers.com

There is an infinite amount of information at virginiageneralassembly.gov Click on "members and session" for quick links.

— MARY KIMM

It's Time for Virginia to Ratify ERA

By JOHN C. COOK
SUPERVISOR, BRADDOCK DISTRICT



"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State on account of sex." Those few and powerful words are from the Equal Rights Amendment, proposed by Congress in 1972, which seeks to make all people, regardless of gender, equal under the law.

Thirty-seven states have ratified the Equal Rights Amendment. Many hope Virginia will be the 38th to join the movement, which could officially ratify the amendment and meet the two-thirds threshold outlined in the Constitution. (Yes, there are issues as to whether ratification now is too late, but that is a legal issue beyond this article.) I urge you to join many community leaders in this bipartisan effort to have Virginia ratify the ERA in 2019.

The road to gender equality in America has been a long and winding route. Women were not even allowed to cast a ballot until 1923, when the 19th Amendment was ratified. Bright, capable women were turned away from fields of study and careers that were deemed masculine by our society. If a woman wanted to be anything other than a nurse or

teacher, she often had to have connections, money, and a lot of luck. The Constitution already protects people in the United States from being discriminated against by the government based on their race, religion, and national origin through the 14th Amendment. The ERA would add gender to those protected categories.

Some opposed to the ERA have raised a parade of horrors, asserting that passage would mean the end of unisex bathrooms, expanding the draft to women, and other things. I see

no reason to assume the ratification of ERA would result in such outcomes. Nor would it affect private employment or interactions, as Constitutional rights only restrict the government, not private citizens. I also do not believe the ERA will, by itself, revolutionize the role of women in society. That is a more complex process that has been ongoing for some time, and will certainly continue. But what the ERA would do is add to our great Constitution a clear, simple, unambiguous statement that men and women are equal under the law. It is that simple, yet that fundamental.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors has unanimously endorsed a resolution calling on the General Assembly to ratify the ERA in 2019. Many other jurisdictions have done the same. A bipartisan team of legislators in Richmond has promised to file such a resolution.

Please join me in encouraging the entire General Assembly to ratify the ERA and bring full equality for women into our federal Constitution.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Appalled by the Road Disrepair

To the Editor:

After reading Andrea Worker's article on Richmond Priorities, I wanted to express my frustration of watching our roads decline in spite of being one of the wealthiest counties in Virginia pouring tax dollars into State coffers. Again and again, Worker noted that NoVA is not receiving its rightful share of state funds for transportation and education.

I've lived in Burke for 38 years and I can't remember a time when

the roads were worse. When I turn on Burke Centre Parkway (west of Roberts Road), Prosperity Road, and Braddock (east of Burke Lake Road), I am appalled at the disrepair. Those three heavily trafficked roads are just a few examples of the state of our asphalt-crumbling road system. I don't care where you live in the Commonwealth, the roads with the most cars/trucks should be given the most state dollars. How hard is that to figure out? Traffic counter boxes abound!

Lynn Sheehan
Burke

Time to End Gerrymandering

To the Editor:

2019 is a critical year for Virginia. The actions — or inactions — of our legislators during the next few months will likely determine how our voting district lines are updated in 2021 in response to 2020 census data. Unless Virginians demand a better process for updating voting districts, we'll probably be stuck with even more partisan and racial gerrymandering than we've got now. Virginia's constitution allows legislators to

draw their own voting districts. But today's politicians use big data and mapping software to capture just the voters they want in their districts and gerrymander around those they don't want. It's not hard to get re-elected when you've rigged the voting districts this way, so politicians have less reason to represent us or do effective constituency work (Akey et al., 2018).

To improve this bleak situation, the organization OneVirginia2021 has formed a bipartisan committee of distinguished constitutional experts.

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Hundreds Attend Meeting on Widening Fairfax Parkway

Cut-through traffic becomes the issue for the Burke Centre attendees.

By Mike Salmon
The Connection

As the Virginia Department of Transportation discussed the plan for widening a five-mile section of the Fairfax County Parkway, a majority of the meeting attendees were concerned about the potential cut-through traffic, specifically on Roberts Road. When they alter the configuration at the Burke Centre Parkway intersection, drivers could adjust their route to Roberts Road, which would lead to congestion on the side streets and neighborhood roads, they said.

The Burke Centre intersection plan will cause “a horrible ripple effect,” said Nancy Morrison, a Burke Centre resident that attended an earlier community meeting at Burke Centre where this was discussed.

Jay Johnson and Renee Mumford were also at the Burke Centre meeting, which was held before Christmas. “There was such an outrage at that proposal to do away with that light,” Johnson said.

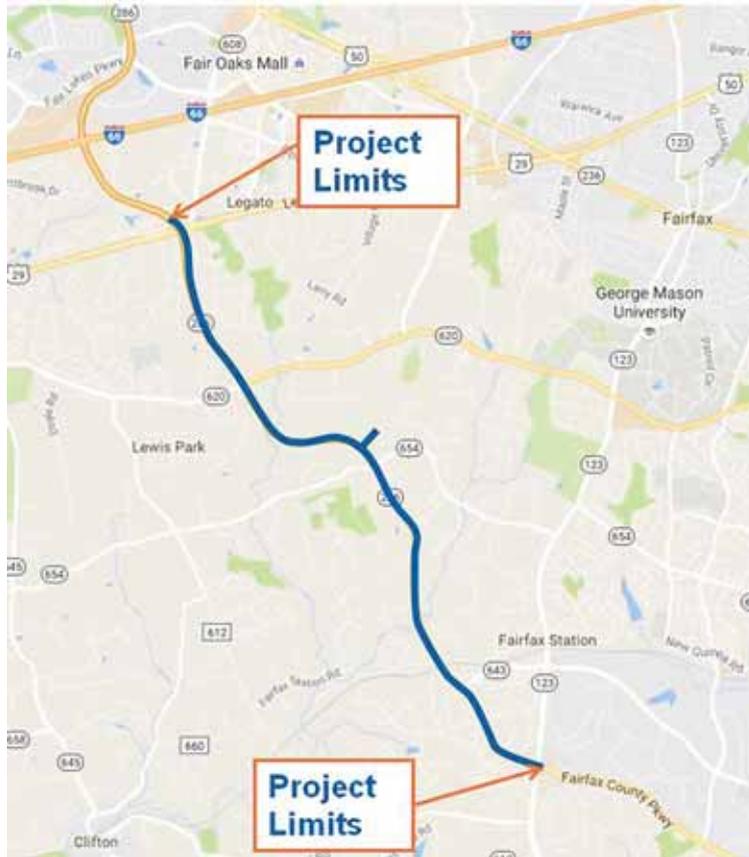
Johnson, Mumford and Morrison were among the packed house Jan. 7 at Robinson Secondary School as officials honed the plan, listening to suggestions and laying out data supporting their design. According to VDOT, the \$195 million project with interchanges at the Popes Head Road intersection, the future Shirley Gate Road Extension, and other intersections along the route “aims to relieve congestion and improve safety.”

Nick Roper, VDOT’s assistant district administrator for project development, led the discussion with a slide show that showed the changes VDOT made since the last meeting on this project in October 2018, and some new data concerning noise, shared use paths, the overall footprint of the project, and interchanges at Shirley Gate Road, Popes Head Road and Burke Centre.

THE CROWD AT ROBINSON was larger than expected, and when they set out 220 seats, more were added as people filed in the doors.

At one point, John Maddox, a VDOT consultant, took over on the slides, starting out with the \$47 million that the Popes Head Road interchange plan would entail. That number could come down depending on the ramps that would or would not be included, and there is space on the comment sheets for the attendees to add their preference. There were comments that the complicated crash data and another called it a “shell game,” as Maddox continued.

Then when he got to the Burke Centre Parkway interchange, he acknowledged the input they’ve got-



MAP BY THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

The project will address widening and intersections between Lee Highway and Ox Road.

Timeline

- ❖ First Public Information Meeting - December 2017
- ❖ Second Public Information Meeting (Series) - September and October 2018
- ❖ Third Public Information Meeting - Jan. 7, 2019
- ❖ Third Public Information Meeting Comment Deadline - Jan. 22, 2019
- ❖ Design Public Hearing: Early 2019
- ❖ Design Approval: Mid 2019
- ❖ Begin Phase 1 Construction: Late 2019 at the earliest, depending on project delivery method
- ❖ Begin Phase 2 Construction: To be determined as additional funding becomes available

Estimated Costs

- ❖ Preliminary Engineering: \$14 million
- ❖ Right of Way Acquisition and Utility Relocation: \$32 million
- ❖ Construction (Phase 1): \$55 million
- ❖ Construction (Phase 2): \$94 million
- ❖ Total: \$195 million

ten. “After the last meeting, we did hear from the Burke Centre Conservancy,” he said. A flyover would be one solution, but the cost would be \$20-30 million, and “we don’t feel we could do this under the conditions we have now,” he said. He did acknowledge spot improvements along Roberts Parkway could be made with the project to handle the additional traffic, but nothing is on paper yet.

When it came time for questions, there were comments about the current state of the roads and potholes, timing the traffic signals, the merchants on Burke Centre Parkway, and one about the flyover and

SEE BURKE CENTRE, PAGE 7

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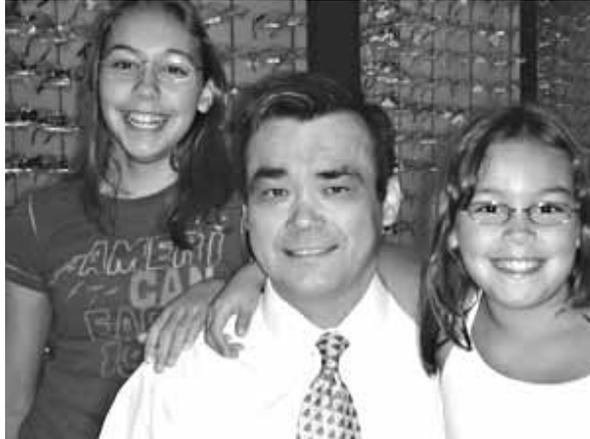
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Beyond the Resolution

Keeping a home in order all year long.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

For those who resolved to keep a neater, cleaner home in the new year, the issue of how to keep it that way through December can be challenging. After the excitement of the fresh start that January offers, the reality of one's day-to-day life emerges. How to keep that newly purged closet neat when rushing to get to a meeting on time? By February, that cleaned-out sports bin might look a bomb went off at Modell's. From shredding or recycling unwanted mail each day to loading the dishwasher after each meal, adopting a few daily cleaning tips can help maintain that tidy home all year long.

"In general, I recommend keeping up with household duties on a daily basis so none of them become a bigger project," said professional organizer Susan Unger of Clutter SOS.

One of the most basic tasks is making one's bed first thing in the morning. "I think that kick starts you into cleaning and organizing mode and sets the tone for the day," said Preston Taylor of From Chaos to Order. "I also recommend keeping a dust cloth nearby so that you can give your dresser and nightstand a quick

dust off so dust accumulation would be one less thing you have to worry about."

Piles of clothing, whether clean or dirty can accumulate quickly and send a home in into disarray. Dedicating five to 10 minutes every evening to rehung clothes and separating items that need to be dry cleaned can help prevent a backlog. "Be sure to put all clothes away on a daily basis rather than leaving in a chair or floor," said Unger. "Clean clothes should be hung up or put in drawers and dirty clothes in the laundry basket."

Taylor recommends tackling laundry every evening if necessary. "If you start a load when you first arrive home from work, you will have time to dry and even fold it before you go to bed, so you're not faced with a mountain of dirty clothes at the end of week," said Taylor.

"If you start a load when you first arrive home from work, you will have time to dry and even fold it before you go to bed, so you're not faced with a mountain of dirty clothes at the end of week."

— Preston Taylor of From Chaos to Order

When it comes to the bathroom, brief, daily attention to detail can keep dirt from spiraling out of control. Rehung towels, and then wiping it down one's shower each time you take a shower are suggestions from Carmen Garcia of CG Green Clean. "Keep a container of disinfecting wipes in your bathroom and wipe down your counters and sink before going to bed each evening," she said. "Also each night, add a squirt of toilet cleaner to your toilet bowl, wipe down the seat and then flush the toilet. It takes less than five minutes to do all of this but you'd be amazed at the difference it makes at the end of the week, especially in children's bathrooms."



PHOTO BY STACY ZARIN GOLDBERG

Wiping down bathroom showers, sinks and counters each day can help keep a home tidy all year long.



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Burke Centre Residents Concerned About Cut-through

FROM PAGE 5

the crash data.

“The flyover is going to cost too much money how much is a life worth?”

One woman complained about pulling out on Route 123 now, and thought it would be worse when the parkway gets widened. “I expect to have a heart attack one day trying to get out,” she said.

Others were concerned about rumors that there will be toll lanes on the parkway. “There’s no plans on this project at this time,” said Roper.

Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) spoke up from the audience against the idea of toll lanes.

Not all were unhappy about the plans. Eric Frady and Ryan Conner live in Colchester Meadows, close to the Popes Head Road interchange.

“They’re giving us our own service road,” said Frady.

“I think they’ve done a pretty good job with the circumstances,” added Connor.



A packed house at Robinson Secondary.

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

THE POPES HEAD ROAD interchange is part of Phase I, and will be built first with some of the funding already in place for this part. Construction could begin as early as 2020 and could be completed in 2022. The project is being financed with federal, state and local funds, including Smart Scale and Northern Virginia Transportation Authority funding. Comments will be accepted until Jan. 22.



The updated project boards were available for viewing and discussion.

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JANUARY 12TH REMODELING + DESIGN SEMINARS
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We Hope You Will Join Us!
Saturday, January 12th, 2019- 10am-2pm
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Seminars run from 10am-12pm. Lunch to follow.
Please arrive at 9:45am for check-in.
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ENTERTAINMENT

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

ONGOING

Glass National 2018. Through Jan. 13 at The Workhouse Arts Center, Vulcan Gallery, W-16, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. The Workhouse Arts Center presents its 3rd Annual Glass National exhibition. Glass National is a juried exhibition which promotes and displays the breadth of contemporary glass artwork being created throughout the USA and Canada by highlighting both functional and sculptural works. This year's juror is artist and educator Carmen Lozar, director of the Merwin and Wakeley Galleries at Illinois Wesleyan University. Visit www.workhousearts.org/event/glass-national-2018.

Founding Artists Exhibition.

Through Feb. 3 at The Workhouse Arts Center, Vulcan Muse Gallery, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Workhouse Arts Center presents a group exhibition highlighting Studio and Arches artists that have been a part of the organization for its 10-year span. In honor of their dedication and support, the exhibition will survey their works in various mediums including painting, sculpture, fiber, glass, precious metals, and mixed media. Visit www.workhousearts.org.

Exhibit: Purchased Lives. Through Feb. 28, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. daily (except major holidays) at the Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center, 10209 Main St., Fairfax. Purchased Lives is a traveling exhibition from the Historic New Orleans Collection. The exhibit examines a complex and divisive period of American history and educating about the far-reaching economic and heartbreaking personal impact of the domestic slave trade. Look for The Washington Home of the Philippine Suffrage Movement March 3-31. Call 703-385-8414.

FRIDAY/JAN. 11

B-I-N-G-O. 7 p.m. at Fire Station 3, 4081 University Drive, Fairfax. Enjoy free coffee, entertaining callers, a friendly atmosphere, \$1,000 guaranteed jackpot, treasure chest progressive raffles, and good food available for purchase. All proceeds go to purchasing fire and rescue equipment. Visit www.fairfaxvfd.com or call 703-273-3638.

Bonita Lestina Performance Series.

8 p.m. in Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive. Performer to be announced. Doors open 7:30 p.m. Free. Visit fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts or call 703-352-ARTS.

SATURDAY/JAN. 12

Winter Art Lessons for Youth Classes (8 yrs & up). 9:30-10:30 a.m. at Woods Community Centre, 10100 Wards Grove Circle, Burke. Instructor Carol Zeitlin drawing and watercolor. Visit czartlessons.com or call 703-250-6930.

Winter Art Workshop for Teens/Adults. 10:30-12:30 p.m. at Woods Community Centre, 10100 Wards Grove Circle, Burke. Instructor Carol Zeitlin, drawing, watercolor, Chinese brush & portfolio development. Visit czartlessons.com or call 703-250-6930.

SUNDAY/JAN. 13

Game Day/Scavenger Hunt. 1-4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Come to the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum and play a Train Game or History Game as well as working on a Scavenger



Dragon Dance during 2018 Chinese New Year Festival at Luther Jackson Middle School.

Chinese New Year Festival

The 12th Annual Chinese New Year Festival hosted by the Asian Community Service Center featuring live performances, including Dragon and Lion dances, Han Costume Fashion show, Asian food, the writing of Chinese names, language, craft and business booths, children world, and also a lunar new year dragon parade. 2019 is the year of the Pig. Because pigs were kept indoors by house owner in ancient China, the Chinese character for "family" has a pig inside a house, leading to the theme for the 2019 festival being Family. Saturday, Feb. 2, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. at Luther Jackson Middle School, 3020 Gallows Road, Falls Church. Free admission. Visit www.ChineseNewYearFestival.org.

Hunt. Ages 16 and older, \$4; 5-15, \$2; 4 and under, free. Visit www.fairfax-station.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, or call 703-425-9225.

Learn from History Lectures. 2 p.m. at the Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center, 10209 Main St., Fairfax. Freedom is Not Enough: African Americans in Antebellum Fairfax County. Call 703-385-8414.

TUESDAY/JAN. 15

Winter Art Lessons for Youth Classes (8 yrs & up). 5:15-6:15 p.m. at Woods Community Centre, 10100 Wards Grove Circle, Burke. Instructor Carol Zeitlin drawing and watercolor. Visit czartlessons.com or call 703-250-6930.

Winter Drawing Plus Color Class (5-8 yrs.). 6:15-7:00 p.m. at Woods Community Centre, 10100 Wards Grove Circle, Burke. Instructor Carol Zeitlin, drawing and watercolor. Visit czartlessons.com or call 703-250-6930.

FRIDAY/JAN. 18

Family Movie Night: "Paddington 2." Lights go down at 7 p.m. at Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. Enjoy a free, family friendly (movies are PG) movie night. Participants may bring their own snacks. An adult must accompany anyone under the age of 14. Britepaths will accept donations of non-perishable food until 9 p.m. Call 703-385-7858.

B-I-N-G-O. 7 p.m. at Fire Station 3, 4081 University Drive, Fairfax. Enjoy free coffee, entertaining callers, a friendly atmosphere, \$1,000 guaranteed jackpot, treasure chest progressive raffles, and good food available for purchase. All proceeds go to purchasing fire and rescue

equipment. Visit www.fairfaxvfd.com or call 703-273-3638.

SATURDAY/JAN. 19

Pet Adoption Event. 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at Pet Supplies Plus, 11054 Lee Highway, Fairfax. Find a new forever animal friend with the help of the City of Fairfax Animal Control and Animal Shelter. Visit www.fairfaxva.gov/government/police/programs/animal-control/adopt-a-pet.

Country-Western Dance. 6-9:30 p.m. at Accotink Universalist Unitarian Church, 10125 Lakehaven Court, Burke. The Northern Virginia Country-Western Dance Association will hold a dance with lessons, 6-7 p.m. and open dancing, 7-9:30 p.m. A DJ provides music. Couples and singles of all ages welcome. Admission for NVCWDA members \$10; non-members \$12; children under 18 accompanied by a paying adult \$5. Smoke-free, alcohol-free. BYO refreshments. Visit nvcwda.org.

SUNDAY/JAN. 20

Garden Gauge (G Scale) Model Train Show. 1-4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Washington, Virginia, and Maryland Garden Railway Society will hold their annual Garden Gauge Model Train Show at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum. Ages 16 and older, \$4; 5-15, \$2; 4 and under, free. Visit www.fairfax-station.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, or call 703-425-9225.

FRIDAY/JAN. 25

B-I-N-G-O. 7 p.m. at Fire Station 3, 4081 University Drive, Fairfax. Enjoy free coffee, entertaining callers, a

friendly atmosphere, \$1,000 guaranteed jackpot, treasure chest progressive raffles, and good food available for purchase. All proceeds go to purchasing fire and rescue equipment. Visit www.fairfaxvfd.com or call 703-273-3638.

Bonita Lestina Performance Series.

8 p.m. in Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive. With IONA Celtic Fusion. Doors open 7:30 p.m. Free. Visit fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts or call 703-352-ARTS.

SATURDAY/JAN. 26

Learn from History Lectures. 2 p.m. at Historic Blenheim, 3610 Old Lee Highway. The War Outside My Window: The Civil War Journals of LeRoy Wiley Gresham, 1860-1865. Call 703-591-0560.

Reminiscences. 7-8 p.m. at Providence Presbyterian Church, 9019 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. After winning first prize at the Golden Classical Music Awards International Music Competition and making his debut performance at Carnegie Hall, concert pianist Mark Irchai returns to the DC-metro area. He will offer "Reminiscences" – a solo piano recital of music written by composers in reflection on their pasts. Free. Visit markirchai.com.

SUNDAY/JAN. 27

Reading Circle and Craft Day. 1-4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. "My Little Book of Trains" will be featured in a reading circle. Train locomotives and tenders will be explored during the activities that day. Participants may make their own ongoing journal for the year's reading circles and information learned about trains and railroading. Ages 16 and older, \$4; 5-

15, \$2; 4 and under, free. Visit www.fairfax-station.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, or call 703-425-9225.

Burke Historical Society. 3:30-5 p.m. at Pohick Regional Library, 6540 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. BHS President Jon Vrana will give a presentation called "If These Walls Could Talk," examining the 19th-century history of Woodbury—also known as the Silas Burke House. Free. Email slawski_brian@yahoo.com or visit www.burkehistoricalsociety.org.

THURSDAY/JAN. 31

Adults' BYOG Night. 7-8:30 p.m. at Kings Park Library, 9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke. BYOG = Bring your Own Game – come to the library with your favorite board game or card game to share. Adults only. Free. Email suzanne.cross@fairfaxcounty.gov, call 703-978-5600 or visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/4741919.

FRIDAY/FEB. 1

B-I-N-G-O. 7 p.m. at Fire Station 3, 4081 University Drive, Fairfax. Enjoy free coffee, entertaining callers, a friendly atmosphere, \$1,000 guaranteed jackpot, treasure chest progressive raffles, and good food available for purchase. All proceeds go to purchasing fire and rescue equipment. Visit www.fairfaxvfd.com or call 703-273-3638.

SATURDAY/FEB. 2

Dog Park Grand Opening. 9 a.m. at the Fairfax City Dog Park, 11000 Berry St., Fairfax. City residents, both two-legged and four-legged, are invited to the grand opening ceremony for the Fairfax City dog park on the former Westmore Elementary School site. The new dog park will be open daily from dawn to dusk. All dogs with current licenses are welcome. The park will include a fenced exercise/run area (fence is a gift from Affectionate Pet Care), park benches, and trash and recycling receptacles. Waste bags and a receptacle will be provided at the dog park. Call 703-385-7858.

Chinese New Year Festival. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. at Luther Jackson Middle School, 3020 Gallows Road, Falls Church. The 12th Annual Chinese New Year Festival hosted by the Asian Community Service Center featuring live performances, including Dragon and Lion dances, Han Costume Fashion show, Asian food, the writing of Chinese names, language, craft and business booths, children world, and also a lunar new year dragon parade. Free admission. Visit ChineseNewYearFestival.org.

SATURDAY/FEB. 3

Author Event: Tiffany Foo-Garcia. Noon-3 p.m. at Barnes & Noble-Fair Lakes, 12193 Fair Lakes Promenade Drive, Fairfax. Tiffany Foo-Garcia will be holding a reading and signing for the first book of her new middle grade culinary adventure series, "Ruby Foo and the Travelling Kitchen: Finding the Foo Identity." Visit rubyfookitchen.com.

Make a Valentine Card Craft. 1-4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Fairfax Station Railroad Museum will have a Valentine's Day Make and Take event. Visitors will create their own Valentine's cards to take home with them. The cost of supplies is included with admission. Ages 16 and older, \$4; 5-15, \$2; 4 and under, free. Visit www.fairfax-station.org or call 703-425-9225.

PEOPLE

Springfield Cab Driver Holds 3 Guinness World Records

Thakuri is sixth-degree black belt in American Marine GoJu-Ryu Karate.

BY STEVE HIBBARD
THE CONNECTION

Ujjwal Sharma Thakuri, 44, is pretty famous in his native country of Nepal. The Springfield cab driver has been written about hundreds of times in Nepali newspapers for being a three-time Guinness World record holder and a sixth-degree black belt in American Marine GoJu-Ryu Karate.

Today, he lives on Leebrad Street in Springfield with his wife Priyanka and daughter Elizabeth, 11, and has driven cabs for D.C. Cab, USA Cab and now drives for Uber. He came to the U.S. 16 years ago after spending his childhood in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Strictly an amateur fighter, he receives no financial rewards for his hard work but holds more than 30 national trophies, medals, belts and cups for competitions inside the U.S.

For his Guinness World Records, he carries the world record for the most full-contact knee strikes in three minutes (226 on one leg), which he achieved in Toledo, Ohio, on Nov. 3, 2018.

He also holds two world records for his Van Dam style weight lift – a split and weight lift (64.63 kg or 142.48 pounds) in Herndon, on Sept. 23, 2017. Athletes have to hold weights in their mouth and body and cross a 10-second mark; his world records were 28 seconds and then 18 seconds. The feat is named after Rob Van Dam, whose record he broke two times.

In challenging the Guinness World Records, he recorded his accomplishments by video in front of several witnesses at his dojo, or training sites in Herndon and Ohio.

HIS RECORDS include a World Championship Belt — the 2017 Kuro Bushi Martial Arts Organization Champion on May 13, 2017, in Concord, N.C. Another World Title Belt is from the Battle of Baltimore 2016 World Karate Championship. Another is a first-place Black Belt in Creative Form at the Amerikick International Champi-

onship on March 24-25, 2017, in Philadelphia, Pa. He also received the Who's Who Legend Award from the American Martial Arts Association. In 2016, he earned two gold medals in the USA Masters Game.

Thakuri is an expert in American Marine GoJu-Ryu Karate and he used to do Shito-Ryu Karate, which means karate with empty hands or no weapons.

"It's a traditional karate from Japan. Karate never teaches attack; it only teaches defense, respect, discipline, so what happens with empty hands is if somebody is in trouble, you are empty-handed. You are going to defend them with empty hands," he said.

There are four brands of traditional Karate that come from Japan. In addition to American Marine GoJu-Ryu Karate (in the U.S.), there's Shito-Ryu, Wado-Ryu, and Shotokan-Kai.

Thakuri said in the World Karate Federation, there is no contact. "Definitely we have a fight, not full contact but light contact and speed. It's very light contact. We have no violence. We don't hit. If I hit someone, I will lose the game," he said.

He added: "We have karate fighting stances and we score by close contact, not body contact. It's a three-minute game, and it depends on how fast you are and how expert your opponent is. The highest score is 14 points in one game, one three-minute game."

Thakuri started training 24 years ago and for his regime, he works out for an hour and 30 minutes every day, including time on a treadmill. "If you want to make a record, you need to train every day in different manners. You can do it in dojo or a home, too," he said.

"To become a person with special skills, you have to learn every day — you have to give it time. Let's say you want to be a fighter, you have to fight everyone. If you want to learn a special skill, you have to give it a time every day for that skill."

He said Karate is physically good for his body and it keeps his mind alert and focused.

"The circulation of your blood makes you alert. So, if you do any kind of sport, you have to choose one specific game, and if you go in deeply, you'll be more of an expert. That's why I choose karate," he said.

When he does a split for a minute, he says it gives him new energy. "If you have a problem, that problem can be solved if you

exercise. If I do a split for one minute, it changes my whole circulation. It is like a meditation for the body," he said.

HE ADMIRES the legendary Hollywood star Chuck Norris, who was famous for his kicks. "Chuck Norris had a great leg technique. He is a world champion. The fact is he was the world champion when Bruce Lee called him for the movies.

If you see Chuck Norris movies, the way he kicks is the perfect kick. That's why I follow him and why my kick is good and my knee strike is good."

His teacher of seven years is 9th Dan American Marines GoJu Karate Master Garry Klaus (USMC Ret.), who lived in Quantico, and has since moved to Illinois. "He is like a father for me," he said. "He was a great, great Master for me — always an idol for me. He showed me the first North American Sports Karate championship — the U.S. Capital Classic in 2015."

In the future, Thakuri aspires to teach self-defense to school teachers in an adult education program.



PHOTOS BY STEVE HIBBARD

Three-time Guinness World Record holder Ujjwal Sharma Thakuri of Springfield with his many trophies and awards.

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NEWS

(www.pabausa.org)

Many current and former state and county elected officials attended the Pakistan American Business Association meeting at Tysons.



PHOTO COURTESY OF G.C. 'GARY' BLACK, III

Three Decades of Strengthening US, Pakistan Business Relations

At the recent Pakistan American Business Association (www.pabausa.org) meeting, many Virginia dignitaries, including former and current government leaders, met at the Sapphire Restaurant in Tysons Corner to celebrate awards for those who have contributed to goodwill and business development between Pakistan and the United States. PABA is more than 30 years old and its founder and chair, M. Siddique Sheikh, a former member of the Rotary Club of Springfield, and well-known Northern Virginia businessman, led the evening's event.

Virginia State Senators Dave Marsden, Richard Black, and George Barker, and several Virginia As-

sembly members were joined by local government supervisors from Prince William and Fairfax Counties. Chef of Police Ed Rossner was also in attendance, as were former Virginia Governor and US Senator George Allen and his daughter Brooke. Former US House of Representative member Tom Davis was there. Debbie Jones, President of the Prince William County Chamber of Commerce joined the function, too. Gary and Ann Baise, a famous American business couple now living in West Virginia came to the event.

Many well-known Pakistan-American Businessmen were in attendance, as well.

Public Safety Drones? Public Input Wanted

The Fairfax County Unmanned Aircraft Systems program will provide an enhanced level of operational capability, safety and situational awareness for first responders, other approved participating agencies, and decision-makers with high quality imagery, data, and customized geospatial solutions using unmanned aircraft while continuing to maintain the public trust.

Fairfax County is developing a comprehensive Public Safety Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) program and would like to hear from residents on what they think. We are hosting six public information meetings located throughout Fairfax County.

The draft program is designed to support a variety of government mission types including:

- ❖ Search and rescue
- ❖ Flooding assessments
- ❖ Pre- and post-disaster damage assessments
- ❖ Crash reconstruction
- ❖ Fire incident/scene management and investigations
- ❖ Hazardous materials responses
- ❖ Wildlife estimation

The draft UAS program would not be used:

- ❖ To conduct random surveillance activities
- ❖ To target a person based solely on individual characteristics, such as, but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, national origin, religion or disability
- ❖ To harass, intimidate or discriminate against any individual or group
- ❖ To conduct personal business or any other unauthorized use

Each public information meeting will include a static display of unmanned aircraft followed by a

presentation outlining the program. After the presentation, there will be an opportunity to ask questions from representatives of the Office of Emergency Management, County Attorney's Office, Police and Fire and Rescue Department. The formal presentation will begin at 7 p.m.

To find out more about the UAS program go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/uas. The draft public safety UAS program manual is located there along with a link to the email account.

Please send your feedback or questions to uas@fairfaxcounty.gov or through the link located on the UAS webpage. Written comments on the draft program must be received by the close of business Feb. 8, 2019 to be included in the official public record.

❖ Jan. 14, 2019 (6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.), Mason District Governmental Center (Community Room), 6507 Columbia Pike, Annandale, VA 22003

❖ Jan. 16, 2019 (6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.), South County Governmental Center (Room 221C), 8350 Richmond Highway, Alexandria, VA 22309

❖ Jan. 23, 2019 (6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.), McLean District Governmental Center, 1437 Balls Hill Road, McLean, VA 22101

❖ Jan. 24, 2019 (6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.), Sully District Governmental Center, 4900 Stonecroft Blvd, Chantilly, VA 20151

❖ Jan. 28, 2019 (6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.), Reston Community Center – Hunter Woods, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston, VA 20191

❖ Jan. 30, 2019 (6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.), Braddock Hall – Kings Park Library, 9002 Burke Lake Road, Burke, VA 22015

BULLETIN BOARD

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

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Interested in local Civil War or Railroad History? Consider volunteering at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum. The Museum offers a variety of volunteer opportunities in Museum events, programs and administration. The Museum is also seeking an individual to coordinate the scheduling of the volunteer staff. Training will be provided for all positions. Email volunteers@fairfax-station.org or call 703-945-7483 for opportunities. The Museum is located at 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station. It is open every Sunday, except holidays, from 1-4 p.m. Visit www.fairfax-station.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, or call 703-425-9225.

The Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke needs volunteer drivers for trips to medical appointments (Monday - Friday) and companion shopping (Tuesday, Friday) within the Fairfax-Burke area and in the South County area (west of Route 1, Alexandria). Office volunteers are also needed to work in the SCFB (Olley Glen) office to schedule rides. Bilingual volunteers (English and Spanish) are needed as drivers and office volunteers. Email Shavaun Wall at recruiter@scfbva.org or call 703-323-4788.

TUESDAY/JAN. 15

ESL Class Registration. 7 p.m. at Lord of Life Lutheran Church, at the Fairfax Campus, 5114 Twinbrook Road, Fairfax or at the Clifton/Centreville Campus, 13421 Twin Lakes Drive, Clifton. English classes for speakers of other languages Tuesdays and Thursdays, Jan. 22-April 11. All are welcome. Registration fee, \$15; text book, \$25. Call 703-323-9500 or visit www.lordoflifeva.org.

Scholarship Application Deadline. The Virginia Latino Higher Education Network (VALHEN) is now accepting applications for the 2018-2019 Scholarship program; to assist Latinx/Hispanic students to pursue higher education in Virginia. Scholarship awards are for one-year and will be paid directly to the recipient's college or university to cover tuition, books, and/or fees. Email scholarships@valhen.org or visit valhen.org

WEDNESDAY/JAN. 16

Park Fees Public Comment Meeting. 7 p.m. in Room 106 of the Herrity Building, 12055 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax. The Fairfax County Park Authority annual meeting on proposed fee adjustments. Information outlining all proposed fee changes at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/feemeeting, at the Park Authority's main office in the Herrity Building and at staffed park facilities, including RECenters, golf courses, nature centers.

LETTERS

FROM PAGE 4

The committee members have proposed a Virginia constitutional amendment built on the experience of other states where re-districting commissions update voting districts more fairly. The amendment proposed for Virginia would create a bipartisan commission that would be required to work transparently and to prioritize community boundaries.

This is the critical part: the proposed amendment must be passed by the Virginia legislature in 2019 to be in place before the 2021 redistricting process. There are other steps to activating the amendment, but we must start now to clean up our gerrymandering.

Now Virginians need to contact their state representatives and demand a transparent, bipartisan redistricting commission that allows citizens to vote together as communities. Otherwise, Virginians could be in for more big data and less democracy running our state until 2031.

JoAnn Kennedy Flanagan
Fairfax

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The Road Very Much Traveled



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Not that I haven't been down this road before, random though its occurrence may have been, but when schedules collide: 24-hour urine collection, pre-chemotherapy lab work, every-three-week infusion, quarterly CT scan and semi annual brain MRI; and of course the follow-up appointment with my oncologist a week or so later to finish the fortnight-long festivities.

The daze leading up to that final Friday are hardly the stuff with which dreams are made. More like nightmares, actually; certainly sleepless nights.

But as you regular readers know from previous columns, there's no real point fretting about it. I mean, what's done is done (what's scanned is scanned) and though I may not want the chips to fall, for the moment, they've already fallen.

Not to be fatalistic, but sometimes, as a cancer patient, ceding control to the realities (you'll note I didn't say "inevitable realities") is part of the process; "going with the flow," as my wife, Dina would say.

At this point, all I can do is wait and hope. I can't do one thing about any of it. I'll know soon enough and if the news is discouraging, I'll deal with it then. I see no advantage in being miserable a week earlier than necessary.

Still, all of these diagnostic demands occurring simultaneously is a bit much. Unfortunately, there's nothing to be done other than to grin (a wry smile, really) and bear it. The calendar/schedule with which my life has become all too familiar (I'm also not saying "consumed"), can hardly be adjusted simply because I don't feel like it.

My life is at stake here. I can't treat it like a household chore. It needs to be adhered to. Wanting circumstances to be different serves no purpose. Accepting reality and integrating the cancer-patient responsibilities into your routine seems a more reasonable course of action.

A few years into my cancer treatment, I remember meeting some of the staff at an off-site cancer-centric function. After exchanging pleasantries, one staff member commended me as being a "very compliant patient."

Not being completely sure what she meant, I asked her to clarify. She said I made all my appointments inferring that some cancer patients don't. Incredulous, I asked further. She sort of half-smickered and said I'd be surprised, which of course I was.

She offered no statistics or anything empirical, but from her reaction, it was not an unusual occurrence. I remember thinking, how do you not be compliant when doctors are working to save your life? Seemed counter intuitive, almost.

So yes, I've been compliant. Extremely so, I'm proud to say.

After my initial diagnosis, I felt I had been given an assignment, so to speak; to save (at least extend) my own life, and I was going to follow doctor's orders accordingly. And even though over the years, I've integrated many non-Western alternatives into my routine, so far as my primary care team (internal medicine doctor and oncologist) was concerned, I've supplemented rather than replaced.

All of which leads me to where I am today: waiting to hear from my oncologist about last week's scans, while swallowing 60-odd pills a day, drinking alkaline water, standing in front of an infrared bulb, and trying to detoxify whenever possible in the hope that together, conventional and non-conventional pursuits will make my immune system stronger and create an environment less hospitable to the growth and movement of the cancer cells that have already been triggered somehow.

The only persistent problem I have is compartmentalizing the presumptive fact that since I was given a "terminal" diagnosis in late February 2009, how is it that I just keep on keepin' on?

Life goes on, generally, I realize, but that's not what I was told would happen. After nearly 10 years, I suppose I'm just a little road weary.

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



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