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OPINION, PAGE 4 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 8 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 10

# Burke CONNECTION

**Senior Living**  
PAGE 6



VideoMagic takes a gold at a previous horse event in Virginia: Burke resident Keri Cannistraro is the CEO of the company.

# Burke Resident Produces Video Magic

NEWS, PAGE 2

**'Rock of Ages'  
At Robinson**  
NEWS, PAGE 9

**Burke Scouts Complete  
Project at Railroad Museum**  
NEWS, PAGE 5



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## Public Hearing Scheduled on E-Bike Use on Park Trails

A public hearing will be held in Lorton, Va., on Thursday, February 7, 2019, on proposed changes to regulations on the use of Electrically Assisted Bicycles, or e-bikes, in Fairfax County and NOVA Parks.

The hearing will cover proposed changes to Park Authority Regulation §1.14 Motor Vehicles and Traffic. Under the proposal, the regulation would define an e-bike and clarify distinctions between e-bikes and mopeds. E-bikes would be allowed anywhere traditional pedal-powered bikes are allowed. Mopeds would be allowed only where motor vehicles are permitted.

As part of the proposed change in regulation, draft guidelines for the use of e-bikes within Fairfax and NOVA Parks' will be presented. These guidelines outline the type and level of performance for e-bikes that are suitable for use within Fairfax and NOVA Parks. Draft guidelines define e-bikes as a "wheeled vehicle equipped with (i) pedals that allow propulsion by human power and ii) an electric motor with an input of no more than 750 watts that reduces the pedal effort required of the rider. This applies to both road and mountain style (e/MTB) e-bikes." These use guidelines will be recommendations only and will not be enforceable by law.

The guidelines for e-bike riders would call for them to yield to pedestrians and equestrians and keep e-bike speeds below 20 miles per hour. In addition, e-bike riders would be strongly encouraged to operate only in areas where traditional bicycles are allowed and to not disturb wildlife, livestock or domesticated animals on park property. E-bike riders would be expected to follow the same regulations and rules regarding access to the parks as other visitors. Riders would assume responsibility for the safe and respectful operation of their e-bike. For more information, visit online at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/e-bikes>

The joint hearing to be held by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority Board and the Fairfax County Park Authority Board will begin at 7 p.m. at The Jean R. Packard Center at Occoquan Regional Park, located at 9751 Ox Road, Lorton, VA.

Please contact the NOVA Parks Operations office at 703-359-4612 or [NOVAParks@nvrpa.org](mailto:NOVAParks@nvrpa.org) to sign up to speak at the public hearing, or the Fairfax County Park Authority Public Information Office at 703-324-8662 or via email at [Parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov) All speakers are welcome; it is not necessary to sign up in advance.

Written comments must be received by March 11, 2019 to be included in the official public record. Please send your feedback to either the Fairfax County Park Authority or NOVA Parks:  
Email (preferred): [Parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov) or [NOVAParks@nvrpa.org](mailto:NOVAParks@nvrpa.org)



To request reasonable ADA accommodations, call 703-324-8727, TTY 711, at least 10 working days in advance of the registration deadline or event.

## PEOPLE

Behind the cameras, Burke resident Keri Cannistraro, left, and assistant producer Cheryl Anders on a Food Dude shoot.



PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/  
THE CONNECTION

# Burke Resident Is the Driving Force Behind Video Magic

Local video production company  
creates marketing videos.

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE CONNECTION

Promoting mom and pop businesses or supporting a humanitarian cause is the motivation for Burke resident Keri Cannistraro, CEO of her own video production company "VideoMagic." She runs the company out of her home office, and employs a part-time production assistant to keep her dream alive. "It's my passion, one of my favorite things to do," she said.

Local non-profits she's worked with include Family Pass, the Lamb Center and Foundation for Fighting Blindness where they blindfolded participants to give them an experience of being blind. They called it "Dancing in the Dark," which Cannistraro said was a humbling experience.

Restaurants are a niche she's taken on, and that brought her to a video character named "Food Dude." She does about two shoots a month with Food Dude, aka Brandon Frye, and recently finished up a shoot at Al's Steak House in Alexandria. Cannistraro showed up with assistant Cheryl Anders and Frye as they explored the process for making a cheesesteak sandwich that Al's is locally famous for.

Frye is trying to get his Food Dude show on the Food Channel. Locally, VideoMagic has done other Food Dude shoots at Texas Donuts in Centreville and the Sully Pour House in Herndon. The show is the same format as the cable hit "Diners, Drive-ins and Dives," and at one time, David Page, the former producer of the Diners show worked with Frye and Cannistraro, and the fact that "he was a perfectionist," added a little stress to the set.

Some of the restaurants and people she's taped have roots in Vienna, so she's on the board of the Vienna Business Association. She gets some business that way including a custom home builder that demolishes older homes and builds new ones in their place. One home was burned down as a practice ground for the local fire department and Cannistraro was there, cameras rolling.

Cannistraro graduated from South Lakes High School in Reston and then from Temple University with a degree in advertising. One thing led to another, and she found herself behind the video camera. At one point, she got her family involved a few



Keri Cannistraro attaches the lavalier microphone to the head chef Mark Williams at Al's Steak House in Alexandria.



VideoMagic takes a gold at a previous horse event in Virginia.

full-production movies with characters and scripts, and the good vs evil plot. "I'm the fun aunt," she said.

Her niece, Kalli Cannistraro, agreed. She's a junior at Oakton High School and has been in several productions including one that followed the Wizard of Oz story line - Kalli was Dorothy and younger sister was the good witch. "It was always fun," Kalli said. Another time, everyone on the vacation went around singing "Goodbye to You," a popular song by Michelle Branch, and Keri Cannistraro edited it all together. "Once a year we all get together and watch them," Cannistraro said.

Cannistraro has already started on a spring project with the horse folks at Middleburg Spring Races where she's interviewing jockeys and others involved to build the exposure of that event, which takes place in April.



# Dinner Across Political Divide

West Springfield's Young Democrats and the Conservative Club came together to host potluck dinner for furloughed government employees.

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE CONNECTION

**W**hen the two sides of the political spectrum got together recently at West Springfield High School, the result was a 30-foot buffet of food to feed those impacted by the government furlough.

This furlough event was the brainstorm of West Springfield students Emily Norton and Harry Bolvin, who have different political ideologies but a vision to come together for others.

"It's simple to put our differences aside in a moment of need," said Bolvin.

"It really feels like everyone I know is touched in some way," by the furlough, Norton added.

Norton is part of the Young Democrats at the school and Bolvin a part of the Young Conservative Club, and the son of Tom Bolvin, a former Republican delegate in the Springfield area.

Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) attended the event which was held in the West Springfield High School cafeteria on Wednesday, Jan. 23. "Fairfax County has a long history of coming together to solve our problems, they need to do the same," Herrity said, noting that the folks on Capitol Hill "are acting like a bunch of third graders."

Later that week, a temporary three-week resolution to the government funding reopened government; both sides will try to arrive at a permanent fix in the meantime.

Herrity noted the indirect effects the fur-



West Springfield students Emily Norton of the Young Democrats, and Harry Bolvin of the Young Republicans, were the organizers of the event.

lough had on the region, including the Metro, restaurants, and even one employee in his office that has a spouse that was furloughed. "It hits real close to home for me," he said.

The table that lined the wall in the cafeteria was full of food which came from area restaurants and the kitchens of students. There was pizza, shrimp, sushi, chicken, pasta and sub sandwiches, to name a few.

Joshua Mettling, a senior at West Springfield, cooked his own baked ziti. "It's a pretty popular dish in my house," he said.

Assistant principal Kay Rizzuto showed up with her husband Pat and an American flag cake. Pat Rizzuto retired from the Air Force and was the energy behind the cake. "He thought this was the thing to do," she said.

An employee from USAID showed up with

her two daughters for dinner. She'd also been to a few other furlough events, including the SkyZone night around the corner. "It's really nice that people recognize the hardship of not getting a paycheck for more than a month," she said.

It's not the first time Bolvin's group and Norton have partnered on a planned even. In September, they got together for a 9/11 tribute and later, Spartanfest at the school.



West Springfield senior Jamie Bishop paints the "potluck dinner," sign. West Springfield's Young Democrats and the Conservative Club came together to a host potluck dinner for furloughed government employees.



The students and food in the front of the cafeteria. West Springfield's Young Democrats and the Conservative Club came together to host a potluck dinner for furloughed government employees.



Assistant principal Kay Rizzuto and her husband Pat with their American flag cake.

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

## Human Trafficking: Monstrosity in Our Backyard

BY PAT HERRITY  
SPRINGFIELD DISTRICT SUPERVISOR  
(R)



**H**uman trafficking is a heinous crime and major issue in Northern Virginia. The victims are often children, teens, and young adults who are forced to have sex with as many as 30 customers a day while their trafficker profits. It's easy to think that this awful exploitation of our most vulnerable citizens wouldn't be prevalent in one of the richest regions in the country. But the truth is it's happening in our backyards, and the fight to end it starts with raising awareness to prevent it.

As a member of the Board of Supervisors, I'm proud to say that I've supported anti-human trafficking legislation for many years, including nationally recognized bipartisan legislation put forward by former Congresswoman Barbara Comstock. I continue to support the efforts of Fairfax County law enforcement, nonprofits, faith groups, and schools in the fight to end human trafficking, but there's still so much to be done.

Since 2013 Northern Virginia has seen over 500 cases of human trafficking, in addition to a significant spike in calls to the National Human Trafficking Hotline within the last two years. Human trafficking is the second fastest growing crime sector nationally, and is pro-

jected to surpass the drug trade as the first.

Prevention of this heinous crime starts with awareness, which is why I support January as Human Trafficking Awareness Month.

For that reason, I recently awarded a proclamation to Bill Woolf, executive director of Just Ask Prevention, declaring January 2019 as Human Trafficking Awareness Month. Just Ask Pre-

vention is a leading nonprofit I've worked closely with, as their goal is to make sure that young people and parents are able to protect themselves and their children from becoming victims of trafficking.

Over the last few years, we've worked together to support the implementation of human trafficking curriculum in Fairfax County Public Schools. This curriculum teaches students to recognize the recruiting and manipulation tactics of traffickers. As some survivor videos note in the curriculum, often times these tactics are subtle, not the "snatch-and-grab" tactic you would expect. Traffickers are becoming increasingly savvy in trapping their victims, even using social media to identify teens who are likely targets and grooming them through flattery.

As a father of two, I see raising awareness of human trafficking as critical for securing the safety of our children. While I have supported many grants to provide funding for our police to combat trafficking, awareness can

protect our children before they fall prey to the horrors of this monstrous crime. With trafficking cases involving all 26 high schools in Fairfax County, we cannot fall into the mindset that it could never happen to us, never to our kid.

I've listened to heartbreaking stories of parents who never believed something as awful as sex trafficking would happen to their daughter or son, until the police found their child assaulted and drugged in a hotel room. No child and no family should ever have to go through that pain.

Those parents have impressed upon me the importance of listening to our kids and asking them questions about the people they meet and interact with before they are manipulated into believing there is no way out.

But it's not enough to just watch out for our own kid. As a community, we need to look out for other people's kids as well by taking notice of the kids on our daughter's soccer team, at our son's bus stop, and at the fast food place on the corner. Together we can ensure that our community is inhospitable to all forms of human trafficking and that no kid goes unnoticed and unprotected.

If you or someone you know is a victim of human trafficking, contact the National Sex Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 or text 233733 for help. If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

For more information about protecting yourself and others from human trafficking, visit <http://www.justaskprevention.org>.

## Tax Season Is Upon Us

BY KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM  
STATE DELEGATE (D-36)



**T**he arrival of W-2 forms in the mail reminds us, even if we may have momentarily tried to forget, that tax season is upon us. This is no ordinary tax year however. Massive changes in federal tax laws will result in significant changes at the state level as well. No one can speak with authority as to what the differences will be for an individual taxpayer as the state General Assembly has not revised state tax law to reflect the federal changes.

The situation we are in is not new. Anytime the Congress makes changes in federal tax policy the state must adjust to those changes and decide whether to adopt the federal policy or to put in new state provisions. As a conformity state Virginia has generally followed federal policy allowing taxpayers to file state returns using the information on their federal form. The difference this year is that the federal changes are so massive that conformity is not realistic without major changes in the way state forms are filed.

Adding to the fact that the forms may be different is the fact that there are major differences between the way deductions and credits have been handled and what will constitute taxable income. High income taxpayers that

were the winners with the federal changes could significantly reduce monies to a state that is already struggling to meet its obligations to funding schools, mental health programs and other priorities.

Essentially Gov. Northam proposed that additional revenues be used for investments in education, workforce development, expanded broadband and targeted tax relief to those who work at the

lowest wages. Republicans have proposed a plan to return more money to taxpayers, but there is strong concern that the Republican plan will make big dents in the state budget. All agree that a decision needs to be reached soon for taxpayers to file their tax forms as soon as possible and as accurately as possible. In past years as many as 650,000 taxpayers have filed in the first ten days of February.

I am patron of a bill supported by Gov. Northam that would make a portion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) refundable to taxpayers based on their income and family size. The current Virginia EITC set at 20 percent of the federal EITC does not allow for a refund of its full value as is done in 23 other states. Under the bill I introduced it is estimated that as much as \$250 million would be returned to the pockets of hard-working Virginians who are at the lowest pay levels. This helps not only those workers but since low-

income residents typically spend that money on goods and services, it boosts the local economy as well.

There is a sense of urgency in the General Assembly that this issue be resolved as soon as possible because it impacts every household. Not only is there a great deal of confusion, but that confusion will be multiplied many times as people start to prepare their returns with incomplete directions. The challenge has been known for several months. Tax season is upon us. Our tax policy needs to be resolved now.

### Write

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

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## Burke Scouts Complete Service Work at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum

Scout Troop 1965 of Burke recently assisted the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum in clearing the Station property of sticks and debris. The project was organized by Cameron Adams (back row, center, with hat and hand on chin), a member of the Troop. The project helped the Scouts to fulfill requirements for community service merit badges. The Fairfax Station Railroad Museum is located at 11200 Fairfax Station.

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## Senior Living

# Weight Lifting in the Golden Years

When done properly, strength training can have tremendous benefits for seniors.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

**R**ichard Foley of McLean says he hits the gym at 7:30 five mornings a week. He spends about 40 minutes lifting weights followed by 40 minutes of walking on the treadmill and 10 minutes of sit-ups and crunches. “I’ve always been physically active,” he said. “I’ve actually slowed down a little, but it’s important to me to keep going for as long as I can.”

A National Institutes of Health (NIH) study of Americans over the age of 60 showed that strength training, such as lifting weights, reduced the risk of osteoporosis and chronic conditions such as heart disease and diabetes. It also found that strength-training exercises has the ability to increase muscles strength and mass and allows seniors to stay mobile longer, while also combating weakness and frailty.

“Improving and increasing the muscles in your legs for example, makes them stronger, which means that you’ll be able to maintain your ability to walk without assistance longer than you might otherwise,” said Rita Days, RN, a gerontological nurse in Falls Church who was not involved in the study. “For seniors who enjoy traveling, shopping or any activity that requires walking, hav-

ing strong quadricep and hamstring muscles means that you’ll be able to enjoy those activities longer. It also means that you’ll have the strength and endurance to navigate difficult terrain during vacations and other activities that involve walking.

Strength training can lead to a sense of independence for everyday activities like grocery shopping or even getting up from a chair, says Jay Rader, a private health and fitness coach based in Arlington. “When you strengthen the muscles around your joints, you can prolong and even improve your range of motion,” he said.

Weight training for seniors, says Days, comes with caveats. “Just because it’s beneficial doesn’t mean that an 89-year-old should go out and start trying to lift 50 pound weights so that he can regain the ability to walk up three flights of stairs like he could 30 years ago,” she said. “The benefits of strength training are tremendous, but they also come with risks and must be done safely. You should definitely consult with a doctor before beginning any kind of exercise program, and it would be my strong recommendation that any one over the age of 50 hire a personal trainer if they’re starting any kind of exercise program.”

In fact, David Schwartz, a personal trainer in Bethesda says that he has four clients who



**Strength-training exercises has the ability to increase muscles strength and mass and allows seniors to stay mobile longer.**

are over the age of 60, and while he personalizes each client’s workout, there are specific exercises that are particularly beneficial to seniors. “I have one client who is 72 and began training with me when she was 68,” he said. “The workouts that I do with her include lunges and squats which

strengthen the quadriceps, or the muscles in the thigh area. It’s been interesting to watch her gain leg strength and be able to walk longer distances. But strengthening the quads can also protect your knees and prevent injuries and other problems.”

The bicep and tricep muscles of the arm are also important to building strength. “All you need are a pair of light to medium weight dumbbells,” said Kat Chetrit, a personal trainer in Fairfax. “Two great exercises, that are also relatively simple are bicep curls where you hold the weight in your hand and bend your arm at the elbow and curl the weight in the direction of your shoulder; and hammer curls, which are very similar except that you hold the weight like you would a hammer. Those are both great exercises for maintaining arm strength.”

Days however, underscores the fact that there are risks involved “You can strain a muscle or drop a weight on yourself or even fracture a bone,” she said. “With the elderly, these injuries can take a longer time to heal than they would in a person who is much younger. The benefits definitely outweigh the risks, but you want to be safe and smart. That includes talking with your doctor and getting help from a personal training, especially if you’ve never or rarely exercised before.”

## How To Best Meet Needs of Older Residents?

### County-wide survey seeks public input.

*The material in these notes and calendar listings comes from the Golden Gazette. To subscribe to the Golden Gazette or update an address, call 703-324-5633. Send email to [birendra.kunwar@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:birendra.kunwar@fairfaxcounty.gov). Go to [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/OlderAdults](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/OlderAdults). Click on the Golden Gazette.*

**I**n February, thousands of adults — 50 and over — will find yellow postcards in their mailboxes inviting them to participate in Fairfax County’s first 50-plus Community Survey for Fairfax County and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church.

The survey is part of a county-wide initiative to create a more aging-friendly community. Survey recipients will be randomly-selected throughout Fairfax County and the cities of Falls Church and Fairfax.

“More than 25 percent of Fairfax County residents are 50 and over, and we can expect to see that number dramatically increase in the coming years,” said Bryan Hill, Fairfax County Executive. “We want to learn more about the experience of aging in Fairfax County so that we can better meet the needs of our 50-plus community.”

The local governments conducting the survey hope to learn more about the lifestyles of individuals among the 50-plus

community including opportunities to work, socialize and volunteer; issues facing these adults such as retirement, housing and caregiving; and their usage of community services like public transportation and senior centers.

“The survey is a unique opportunity for us to make our voices heard in a powerful way,” said Carolyn Sutterfield, chairman of the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging. The commission, the citizens advisory council for the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging, oversees and promotes the five-year Fairfax 50-plus Community Action Plan adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2014. Sutterfield strongly encourages those who receive the survey to take the time to complete it, whether online or by mail. “The 20 minutes you spend on this have the potential to improve the quality of life for older adults in the Fairfax community for years to come,” she said. Survey results will play an important role in planning the next 50-plus Community Action Plan.

The county has contracted with the National Research Center to conduct the survey. All responses are anonymous.

#### SURVEY TIMELINE

❖ Week of Feb. 4: 22,000 randomly-selected adults – 50 and over – will receive a yellow postcard in the mail indicating that they have been randomly selected to par-

ticipate in the survey.

❖ Week of Feb. 11: Selected respondents will receive their survey materials to be completed online or in writing and returned.

❖ Spring: Staff will review and analyze survey results and post the findings online along with next-steps in the process.

While not everyone will receive a survey, everyone is encouraged to make their voice heard. The public is welcome to contribute suggestions and comments to the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging by email at [dfscommissiononaging@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:dfscommissiononaging@fairfaxcounty.gov)

### Seniors Calendar

- ❖ Feb. 4, 10:15 a.m.-2 p.m. AARP Free Tax Preparation Services. AARP is offering free tax help with a preference given to older adults. Arrive at least one hour before the session closes. Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria. For information and additional dates, call 703-765-3645.
- ❖ Feb. 6, 9:30-11:30 a.m. LLI/NOVA Forum: Will we have enough money to manage well in our retirement years? Hear about how to manage money in retirement years and how to avoid serious pitfalls at each stage of retirement. Free and open to the public. Free parking. Ernst Cultural Center, NOVA Annandale Campus, 8333 Little River Tnpk., Annandale. Call 703-503-0600.
- ❖ Feb. 9, 2-3:30 p.m. Floral Design Workshop: Valentine Topiary. Branch out for Valentine’s Day by making a topiary arrangement with

or during the public comment period of their regular monthly meetings (for a schedule of upcoming meetings go to [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/familyservices/older-adults/fairfax-area-commission-on-aging](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/familyservices/older-adults/fairfax-area-commission-on-aging)

You can follow the county’s progress on this survey initiative and find additional ways to share comments and suggestions on aging online at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/50-plus-community-survey](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/50-plus-community-survey).

Questions?

Call 703-324-4444 or submit questions by email to [OSMDataAnalyticsosm@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:OSMDataAnalyticsosm@fairfaxcounty.gov).

assorted flowers and Valentine trim. You get to keep the beautiful topiary for yourself. Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Rd., Alexandria. To register, call 703-642-5173 or 703-222-4664.

- ❖ Feb. 11, 10-11 a.m. Assisted Living: Can I Afford It? Find answers to how much assisted living costs and what expenses Medicare/Medicaid cover. In addition, discuss planning to pay for expenses and how this influences your retirement and legacy goals. Free. Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St. SE., Vienna. To register, call 703-255-7801.
- ❖ Feb. 12, 7-8 p.m. Register for Fairfax County’s free Family Caregiver Telephone Support Group. Call in to join this month’s discussion “Prevention and Problem Solving.” Discuss how to use problem solving and prevention techniques to avoid the crisis trap. To register, call 703-324-5376.





PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Glory Days Grill co-founders Bob Garner, Jeff Newman, and Richard Danker along with Kate Sample of the The Sunshine Foundation, and Jim Rafferty of Glory Days Grill in Burke.

## Charity Golf Tournament Raises \$63,049

Glory Days Grill hosted its 31<sup>st</sup> annual golf tournament at the Westfield's Golf Club in Clifton in October 2018. The tournament raised a record \$63,049 of which \$35,000 has been designated for the tournament's main beneficiary, The Sunshine Foundation. Glory Days Grill will make additional contributions totaling \$28,049 to a variety of local charities and foundations serving the Washington-Baltimore corridor. Past recipients include local organizations such as: Jill's House; Lorton Community Action Center; Life with Cancer; Heroes, Inc.; Rainbow Therapeutic Riding; and The Fisher House.




### New Year. New Plan. Fresh Start. Fairfax Divorce Workshop.

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<p><b>Date:</b> Saturday, February 9, 2019 Saturday, March 9, 2019 Saturday, APRIL 13, 2019</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 9:00-9:30a.m.-Registration 9:30-1:00 p.m.-Workshop</p> <p><b>Place:</b> <b>Duff &amp; Kronfeld, P.C.</b> Fair Oaks Commerce Center 11320 Random Hills Road/Suite 630 Fairfax, VA 22030</p>	<p><b>No Fee</b> Pre-registration recommended as space is limited.</p> <p><b>Online Registration</b> <a href="http://www.secondsaturdaynova.com">www.secondsaturdaynova.com</a></p> <p><b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:nduff@secondsaturdaynova.com">nduff@secondsaturdaynova.com</a></p> <p><b>Call:</b> (703) 591-7475</p>
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# ENTERTAINMENT

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

## ONGOING

### 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](http://www.workhousearts.org).

### Workhouse Student-Faculty Exhibition.

Through Feb. 10 at Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. The Workhouse Arts Center Student and Faculty Exhibition will survey works from course instructors, faculty and their students. Explore the numerous paintings, drawings, glass works, clay works and fiber art created in Workhouse's classes and workshops. Call 703-584-2900 or visit [workhousearts.org](http://workhousearts.org).

### Art Exhibit: Amazing Art Jam.

Through Feb. 24, gallery hours at the Vulcan Gallery, Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Workhouse Arts Center hosts the third iteration of the Amazing Art Jam. This pop-up exhibition offers fresh perspectives by exploring several young, contemporary themes including street art, anime, Marvel iconography and hip-hop culture. Curated by Ackshun Jackson, the show will feature works in various mediums including interactive, sculpture, murals, paintings and works on paper from over 40 regional artists. Visit [www.workhousearts.org/event/amazing-art-jam](http://www.workhousearts.org/event/amazing-art-jam).

**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.

## 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](mailto:suzanne.cross@fairfaxcounty.gov), call 703-978-5600 or visit [librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/4741919](http://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](http://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 [www.ChineseNewYearFestival.org](http://www.ChineseNewYearFestival.org).

**Winter Music and Dance Festival.** 7:30-9:30 p.m. at Workhouse Arts W3 Theatre, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Next Reflex Dance Collective presents the Winter Music and Dance Festival featuring performances from area musicians and dancers culminating in a one night collaborative performance of diverse creativity, live music and dance. \$10-\$25 (reserved seating). Visit [insidenovatix.com/events/next-reflex-dance-collective-winter-music-and-dance-festival](http://insidenovatix.com/events/next-reflex-dance-collective-winter-music-and-dance-festival) for tickets.

**Fairfax Symphony Orchestra.** 8 p.m. at the GMU Center for the Arts Concert Hall, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. The program includes: Mendelssohn – Hebrides Overture; Mendelssohn – Violin Concerto (Chee-Yun, violin); and Schumann – Symphony No. 2. Charming, charismatic, and deeply passionate about her art, Chee-Yun continues to carve a unique place for herself in the ever-evolving world of classical music. Before the concert (7 p.m.), enjoy a discussion with the artists and music director Christopher Zimmerman. \$15-\$65. Visit [www.fairfaxsymphony.org](http://www.fairfaxsymphony.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](http://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](http://www.fairfax-station.org), [www.facebook.com/FFXSRR](http://www.facebook.com/FFXSRR), or call 703-425-9225.

## TUESDAY/FEB. 5

**Parktykes: Explore the Natural World.** 1:30-2:15 p.m. at Lake Accotink Park, 7500 Accotink Park Road, Springfield. Adults with toddlers are invited to join a naturalist in the classroom and outdoors to discover the wonders of the natural world. The program is designed for young explorers, age 1-3, and an adult. \$9 per child. Meet at the visitor center. Call 703-569-3464 visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/lake-accotink](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/lake-accotink).

**Burke Historical Society.** 7-9 p.m. at Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Local authors, Mary Lipsey and Cindy Bennett, will share their experiences and tips on the process of researching, writing, and publishing a historical book. Free. Email [slawski\\_brian@yahoo.com](mailto:slawski_brian@yahoo.com) or visit [www.burkehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.burkehistoricalsociety.org).

## TUESDAYS/FEB. 5-26

**Try Girl Scouts.** 6-7 p.m. at West Springfield Elementary School, 6802 Deland Drive, Springfield. Make new friends, learn about Girl Scouts, and meet the requirements for two new cybersecurity badges. \$25 for four weeks. Email [cosborne@gscnc.org](mailto:cosborne@gscnc.org) or call 703-372-4341.

## FRIDAY/FEB. 8

**Gunston Hall Game Night.** 6-9 p.m. at Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Road, Mason Neck. Gunston Hall is opening its doors after-hours to welcome game enthusiasts to immerse themselves in a variety of 18th-century card, board, and dice games. \$35 registration includes beverages and heavy hors d'oeuvres, including some items made from 18th-century recipes. Visit [www.gunstonhall.org](http://www.gunstonhall.org).

**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

## Choreography Festival

Small Plates creates a growth environment by holding guided Q&A feedback sessions with the audience after each performance. Local dance and artistic professionals are encouraged to attend as audience members and bring their voices to this conversation, and to provide choreographers with valuable feedback and networking opportunities. This artist/audience interface is what makes Small Plates special. The Friday performance will feature pre-professional dance created by student choreographers, or by professional choreographers performed by students. Saturday's performance will mainly feature professional artists with limited space for pre-professional work. Friday-Saturday, Feb. 8-9, 8 p.m. at Building W-3 (Theatre), Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. \$15-\$20. Call 703-584-2900 or visit [workhousearts.org](http://workhousearts.org).

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](http://www.fairfaxvfd.com) or call 703-273-3638.

## FRIDAY-SATURDAY/FEB. 8-9

**Small Plates Choreography Festival.** 8 p.m. at Building W-3 (Theatre), Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Small Plates creates a growth environment by holding guided Q&A feedback sessions with the audience after each performance. The Friday performance will feature pre-professional dance created by student choreographers, or by professional choreographers performed by students. Saturday's performance will mainly feature professional artists with limited space for pre-professional work. \$15-\$20. Call 703-584-2900 or visit [workhousearts.org](http://workhousearts.org).

## SATURDAY/FEB. 9

**Animal Sweetheart's Dance.** 2-4 p.m. at Hidden Pond Nature Center, 8511 Greeley Blvd., Springfield. Dance, laugh, and learn at the social event of the winter season. Space limited, register online ([tinyurl.com/y9nz9q48](http://tinyurl.com/y9nz9q48)) or call 703-451-9588 to save a spot. \$9. Email [casey.riley@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:casey.riley@fairfaxcounty.gov) or call 703-451-9588.

**Lorton Community Blood Drive.** 3:30-7:30 p.m. at the Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Register online to donate. The INOVA Donation Bus which will be located right outside Workhouse Building W-16. After donating, stay for the monthly, free Second Saturday Art Walk, with the chance to meet nearly 100 Workhouse artists. Make an appointment at [tinyurl.com/y7q7samt](http://tinyurl.com/y7q7samt).

**Create + Sip: Recreating Escher.** 4-6 p.m. at the Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Monthly afternoons of wine and fun offer more than just painting. Each Create + Sip is taught by one of Workhouse's studio artists, offering techniques, plus fiber, glass and clay. With Workhouse artist Wendy Anderson, explore the unique world of tessellation via its modern master, M.C. Escher. Tessellations will be created on wooden art palettes with paint. \$35. Visit [insidenovatix.com/events/create-sip-recreating-escher](http://insidenovatix.com/events/create-sip-recreating-escher) for tickets.

**Winter Wonderland Family Dance.** 5-8 p.m. at Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. Bring the whole

family for an evening of magic and wonder with dinner, special guest characters, crafts, dancing and more. All families are welcome. \$30 per adult, \$20 per child. Visit [fairfaxva.gov/parksrec](http://fairfaxva.gov/parksrec) or call 703-385-7858.

**Chili Cook Off and Bingo Night.** 6-9 p.m. at Historic Pohick Episcopal Church, 9301 Richmond Highway, Lorton. The Ann Mason Guild of Pohick Church will hold their annual Chili Cook Off and Bingo event. Tickets are \$10 per person (without a chili entry) and \$5 per person (with chili entry). Children 10 and under are free. Hot dogs will also be available. Contact: Wendy Remaly at [wendy.remaly@gmail.com](mailto:wendy.remaly@gmail.com) or Angela Edgemon at [Aedge619@aol.com](mailto:Aedge619@aol.com), or call 703-339-6572 or visit [www.pohick.org](http://www.pohick.org).

## SUNDAY/FEB. 10

### T-TRAK Scale Model Train Show.

1-4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Northern Virginia T-TRAK members will hold a N gauge Model Train Display. Ages 16 and older, \$4; 5-15, \$2; 4 and under, free. Visit [www.fairfax-station.org](http://www.fairfax-station.org), [www.facebook.com/FFXSRR](http://www.facebook.com/FFXSRR), or call 703-425-9225.

**Handbell Dessert Concert.** 3 and 6 p.m. at St. Matthews United Methodist Church, 8617 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. Be serenaded by handbell choirs at their fundraising event while enjoying dessert at a candle lit table. Adults, \$15; ages 7-17, \$12; age 6 and under, \$8. Tickets at [Shawn.Guth@verizon.net](mailto:Shawn.Guth@verizon.net). Email [mb.brooke@verizon.net](mailto:mb.brooke@verizon.net).

## FRIDAY/FEB. 15

**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](http://www.fairfaxvfd.com) or call 703-273-3638.

## SATURDAY/FEB. 16

**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](http://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/police/programs/animal-control/adopt-a-pet).

**Valentine's Day Banquet.** 6:30-11 p.m. at Waterford Receptions at Springfield, 6715 Commerce St., Springfield. The Family Ministry of the Greater Little Zion Baptist Church in Fairfax is sponsoring their Annual Valentine's Day Banquet. All couples and singles are invited to fellowship and to enjoy an evening of fine dining, music, dancing and featured entertainment. \$60 per person (payment deadline is Feb. 10). Contact Anthony or Terri Bazemore at 703-239-9111.

**Art for the Heart.** 7-10:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall at Church of the Nativity, 2400 Nativity Lane, Burke. The Knights of Columbus Fr. Sikora Council 7992 is holding their Annual Art Auction. Join in a festive evening of viewing and bidding on a variety of fine art, memorabilia, and collectibles while enjoying complementary wine and specialty hors d'oeuvres prepared by A Bit More Catering. \$15 per person. For tickets contact Tom Savage at 512-983-5641 or [tomkc7992@gmail.com](mailto:tomkc7992@gmail.com).





PHOTO BY RICH CONDIT

In rehearsal, the middle schoolers of Rambunctious Theatre Company practice their choreography as well as putting on their costumes and makeup.

## 'We Built This City' Together

Robinson's Rambunctious Theatre Company puts on 'Rock of Ages: Middle School Edition.'

BY KHUYEN DINH  
THE CONNECTION

Returning back to directing after taking the year off, Amy Hard aimed to bring the audiences of Rambunctious Theatre Company to

a concert of the 80s with Robinson Secondary School's production of "Rock of Ages: Middle School Edition."

With a cast of more than sixty students and a technical crew almost double that, Rambunctious The  
SEE ROBINSON, PAGE 10

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## NEWS



PHOTOS BY RICH CONDIT

Singing as loud as they can, the cast of Rock of Ages rehearse the show with lights, costumes and props during their long weekend rehearsals.

## Robinson Presents 'Rock of Ages'

FROM PAGE 9

atre Company has had their hands full with such an ambitious project. "Rambunctious has a special energy," says senior and stage manager Nikki Spina. "I've grown alongside the department and for 'Rock of Ages' to be my final show as a Stage Manager has been absolutely incredible. I get to watch magic happen every single day." The entire show process is a collaborative effort, as every student involved contributes some aspect to the show. "I see students work together and focus their energy into creating something they truly care about. I see kids making friends that they will be working alongside for the next six years," says Spina.

Not only are there middle schoolers contributing to the show but there are plenty of high school mentors who have devoted their time to aid the show and make it as successful as possible. Many of the high schoolers have contributed to the shows when they were in middle school and were presented with the opportunity to become the mentors that they looked up to years later. "I vividly recall being a cast member when I was in middle school," said Robinson Secondary senior Cole Terra. "Tech was a very mysterious thing and I did not know exactly what it entailed. The high schoolers at the time had an incredible work ethic and diligence that was admirable and it imbued me with a desire to do tech for a theatre production. Today, I am in



Running lines in full costume, middle schoolers John Wiest and Katherine Wambolt get into character before 'Rock of Ages' opens in a couple of weeks.

the position of those mysterious technicians I looked up to."

Leather jackets, crimped hair, and acid washed jeans, "Rock of Ages" will bring you right back to the eighties with their humongous set stained with graffiti and hand painted stage. "I have invested lots of planning and time into building one of the largest and most ambitious sets that I have seen," says Terra, who is working as the set and construction designer for the show. "The set has been coming together in a truly spectacular way, and has been built at an accelerated pace. Of all the sets that I have worked on, I am the most proud of this one."

"Rock of Ages" is not only special to the middle schoolers in the cast and crew but the high schoolers who are thrilled to give

those younger students the same experience they had that kept them with theatre. "This show specifically means so much to me as it feels like a passing of the baton and a continuation of the legacy of the department that has shaped me. I am so thrilled to have been connected to a show that welcomes in a new generation of artists to the Rambunctious family," says Nikki Spina. Not only does the musical include songs such as "Final Countdown" and "Don't Stop Believin'," the makeup includes colorful eyeshadows and teased hair and the costumes strut glitter and neon. Rambunctious Theatre Company's Rock of Ages is showing from Feb. 8 to 17, including a Sensory Friendly show on Feb. 13. Tickets can be found at [robinsondrama.org](http://robinsondrama.org).

## BULLETIN BOARD

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

### WINTER SHELTERS

Find homeless and cold weather drop-in centers and shelters that

serve Northern Virginia at [www.novaregion.org/174/Homeless-Shelter-Lists](http://www.novaregion.org/174/Homeless-Shelter-Lists).

If you see someone in Fairfax County who could be at risk for hypothermia, call the police non-emergency number at 703-691-2131. If they appear to be in distress, call 911.

### 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

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 11

[WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](http://WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM)



# BULLETIN

FROM PAGE 10

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](mailto: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](http://www.fairfax-station.org), [www.facebook.com/FFXSRR](http://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](mailto:recruiter@scfbva.org) or call 703-323-4788.

## INPUT SOUGHT

**Shaping the Future Together.** Fairfax County Government is beginning a strategic planning process with the community to shape the future together. The goal is to hear all voices and reach all segments of the community. This effort will span most of 2019, but in this first phase, the community is being asked to visit [fairfaxcounty.gov/strategicplan](http://fairfaxcounty.gov/strategicplan) and:

- Take a short five-question online survey
- Join a community conversation in person: Feb. 13 – Reston; Feb. 25 – Alexandria; Feb. 26 – Fairfax; March 6 – Falls Church.
- Share the survey and conversation invitation with neighbors, co-workers and county family and friends.

## Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Program.

Fairfax County is developing a comprehensive Public Safety Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) program and would like to hear from residents. Each of six public information meetings 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. The formal presentation will begin at 7 p.m. To find out more about the UAS program go to [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/uas](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/uas). Send feedback or questions to [uas@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:uas@fairfaxcounty.gov). 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.

- Wednesday, Jan. 30, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Braddock Hall – Kings Park Library, 9002 Burke Lake Road, Burke.

## TUESDAYS THROUGH FEB. 19

**Workshop Series: Mind in the Making.** 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Dunn Loring Center for Parent Services, 2334 Gallows Road, Entrance 1 – Room 100, Dunn Loring. Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs by Ellen Galinsky, encompasses an evidence-based list of life skills that are essential for children to succeed socially, emotionally and intellectually in the short and long term. Participants may register for one or all of the workshops and do not need to attend the previous class. Registration is limited. Call 703-204-3941 or visit [www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center](http://www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center) for more or to register.

- Tuesday, Feb. 5 – Critical Thinking (part 5)
- Tuesday, Feb. 12 – Taking on Challenges (part 6)
- Tuesday, Feb. 19 – Self-Directed, Engaged Learning (part 7)

## THURSDAY/JAN. 31

### Poetry & Creative Writing Contest Deadline.

The Fairfax County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. announces its 4th Annual Poetry Contest for Middle School Students and Creative Writing for High School Students. Visit [www.fcacdst.org/creative-writing-contest](http://www.fcacdst.org/creative-writing-contest) for contest details and to download the applications. Email [artsandletters@fcacdst.org](mailto:artsandletters@fcacdst.org) with questions.

## FRIDAY/FEB. 1

**High School Success.** 10 a.m.-noon at Dunn Loring Center for Parent Services, 2334 Gallows Road, Entrance 1 – Room 100, Dunn Loring. Ann Dolin, M.Ed., educational consultant and author will presents “High School Success: A Strategic Transition for Teens Moving to Higher Grades,” on helping teens finish middle school strong, build positive habits for the future, shift from guided to independent learning, effective time management, and manage their social life so it doesn't interfere with school. Call 703-204-3941 or visit [www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center](http://www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center)

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# Cat It Again



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As my white cat, Twinkle, continues to walk left to right and right to left across my writing pad with various stops in between for scratching, nudging, belly-rubbing and paw patty cakes, I can't help wondering if there's a method to her non-madness. She doesn't appear to be the least bit agitated. She's not meowing her presence or seemingly demanding anything – other than attention, that is. In fact, she's purring and seems quite pleased with herself.

What's puzzling to me is exactly what the attraction/need is here? I don't have any treats. Her food and water bowls are not here. Neither is her litter box. It's in the adjacent room. Yet here she sits and rolls and scratches herself with what appears to be not a care or concern in the world. She seems extremely content with her situation.

I would have expected her to be sleeping in the house somewhere like our other four cats. I mean, it is 2:15 in the afternoon, many hours after her 6:30 breakfast and hours still to go before her 5:30 dinner. Heck, I've even dozed off myself for a bit before I sat down to try and write this column. But here she is, wide awake, and back and forth.

My wife, Dina, maintains that cats and dogs have a sixth sense when it comes to people being sick, and tend to hang around those afflicted with something or other, providing aid and comfort, if you will.

And so, she gets nervous when multiple cats surround me when we're sitting on the couch watching television: a black cat, usually "Sleeky," lays on top of the couch behind where I'm sitting; Twinkle, sits on the couch next to me and cuddles up against my left thigh; and Biscuit (one of our two buff-colored brothers) "sphinxes" on the coffee table staring at me while I'm having to stare through him to watch television. The other two cats, "Chino" and Andrew are usually sleeping in their spots, out of sight, but never out of mind.

A shift change, apparently. "Chino" has just jumped on my desk and Twinkle has jumped off, no doubt to find a warm spot to sleep perchance to dream. Chino is now laying on his side/back – partially on my writing pad, with his rear end pressed up against my left forearm with all four paws raised up in the air not exactly in my direction but definitely in my proximity.

This cat exchange sort of reminds of how my brother and I would alternate our visiting time with our parents on Sundays, splitting the day so that one of us was always present and accounted for.

But I'm not sick (OKAY, diseased then), and I don't feel as if I need 24/7-type cat companionship. Though I am home alone a lot – and left with my own thoughts, I don't view the cats shifting around me as anything more than there considering me as a big toy.

A toy whose movements and appearance are stimulating to them, sort of like a giant scratching post infused with catnip. A combination they couldn't possibly ignore, like peanut butter and chocolate is to me.

So as much as I feel nurtured and loved and comforted by this cat behavior, I don't feel it's because I'm sick, or rather about to be sick (again, their sixth sense at work), I feel simply that we have some very affectionate cats whose indoor-only lives have caused them to become dependent and appreciative of those who feed and water them. (We won't mention that we're also the ones who stuff them into cat carriers and drive them to the vet, an experience which they collectively hate.)

But if I do get sick (I guess I should be honest: get sicker, I do have cancer) I know I can count on "Chino," Biscuit, Twinkle, Andrew and "Sleeky" to always keep me company. I don't know how much better their presence will make me feel, but I do know their presence will keep me from feeling worse.

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



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