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Roy Shrouf, deputy coordinator for the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management and the manager for the proposed Unmanned Aircraft Systems (drone) program, gave the presentation to the public at the McLean area meeting.

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PEOPLE

Potomac School Senior Named Regeneron Top 40 Finalist

Carolyn Beaumont, a senior at The Potomac School in McLean, has been named a Top 40 Finalist in the 78th Regeneron Science Talent Search, the nation's oldest and most prestigious science and mathematics competition for high school seniors. In achieving this honor, she joins the ranks of Nobel Prize winners, MacArthur Foundation Fellows, and other distinguished alumni of the Science Talent Search. Nearly 2,000 students nationwide entered the competition this year.

A student in Potomac's Science and Engineering Research Center (SERC) program, Carolyn has been absorbed in her research for the past two years. Initially interested in astrochemistry, Carolyn ultimately decided to focus her research on geochemistry. She developed a project to examine the way water reacts with magma, with the goal of testing the theory favored by geologists about the interaction and water's composition during a volcanic eruption.

Students in the SERC program have a faculty research advisor, as well as a research mentor outside school. Carolyn worked with Dr. George Cody at the Carnegie Institute of Science's Geophysical Laboratory. There, she was able to use technology that allowed her to create models of magma and observe its reaction with water. She achieved this by mixing water with different types of melted glass, because the degradation effect of

magma's high temperatures on rocks results in notable glass formation. Her discoveries turned out to be truly remarkable: She showed that volcanoes react differently depending on the amount of water present in the magma. This runs counter to the current thinking of professional geologists, making Carolyn's project a source of new and important information within the geochemistry community.

"The way water reacts with magma follows a different path from what was accepted," she explains. "That has implications for the properties of magma and the way it's used in other geochemical models, which is really interesting."

Carolyn's faculty research advisor, Isabelle Cohen, says, "All of us in the SERC program have admired Carolyn since day one. She has a way of thinking that fits right into academic research at the highest level, and that's so rare in a student of her age. Doing the work she has done in the geological field is truly remarkable – it's not often that you disprove a model."

And Carolyn isn't done being a trailblazer yet. She adds, "This kind of research is definitely something I want to continue pursuing in college. I really enjoyed the process."

As a result of being named a Top 40 Regeneron Scholar, Carolyn will be awarded at least \$25,000. She will participate in the Regeneron Finals Week competition in Washington, DC, this March.

"She has a way of thinking that fits right into academic research at the highest level, and that's so rare in a student of her age."

**—Faculty Research Advisor
Isabelle Cohen**



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Carolyn Beaumont has been named a Top 40 Finalist in the Regeneron Science Talent Search.


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PHOTOS BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION

Supervisor John Foust (Dranesville District) welcomes attendees to the public meeting on a proposal to establish an Unmanned Aircraft Systems program for Fairfax County Public Safety departments at the McLean Governmental Center.



Dave Rohrer, deputy county executive in charge of the county's public safety departments and programs, and Maj. Christian Quinn with Fairfax County Police are heavily involved in the UAS program development and are part of the group making the presentations to the public before the group seeks approval to launch from the Board of Supervisors.

Drones to Help with Public Safety?

County Presents Draft Proposal for drone program at public meetings.

BY ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County emergency management personnel want to add unmanned aircraft systems – more commonly known as drones – to their toolkit of resources. In May of 2017 they began the process, gathering information and stakeholders and putting pens and calculations to paper to outline their reasoning before taking their preliminary findings and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors in January of 2018.

At that meeting, the Board deferred any decision until a task force was formed to address all ancillary issues and public input could be sought.

To date, that task force, which includes the departments of Emergency Management, Public Affairs and Legal, the County Police, Fire and Rescue, the Fairfax County Park Authority, local drone organizations and representatives from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the Audubon Society among others, has met twice, and has a third meeting scheduled on Feb. 19.

Public information and feedback sessions have also begun, with the second meeting taking place on Jan. 22 at the McLean Governmental Center. In total, 6 public presentations are scheduled throughout the county, and feedback received through the close of business of Feb. 8, 2019, will be included in the official public record that is planned for presentation to the Board's Public Safety Committee on March 12.

AT THE MCLEAN EVENT, Dranesville District Supervisor John Foust gave opening remarks praising the preparatory work done by Roy Shroud, and his gathered colleagues. Shroud is the deputy coordinator for the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management and the manager for the drone



Roy Shroud, deputy coordinator for the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management and the manager for the proposed Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) program, gave the presentation to the public at the McLean area meeting.

program. Foust credited Shroud and company for the thoroughness of their efforts, the inclusion of so many viewpoints and areas of expertise in the task force, and for the transparency that the group maintains with county officials, interested stakeholders and partners, and with the public.

Shroud was the headliner at the meeting, supported by Dave Rohrer, deputy county executive for public safety.

Shroud and Rohrer said that the program, and the 40+ page draft "UAS Program and Operations Manual" (available online on the county's website) are just that – drafts.

"Nothing is approved yet," said Shroud. Taking best practices from around the country and from the other 25 programs already in operation in Virginia – including in Loudoun and Stafford counties – "with the work of the task force and feedback from our citizens, we hope to secure the approval of the Board and be operational later this year."

Shroud said the discussion was about the

use of drones by emergency management and law enforcement, not public recreational activity, although a planned half-day drone session tentatively scheduled for the Fall if the program is approved, would include information about the private use of drones in the area.

Shroud and Rohrer made a case for using drones for public safety.

COST SAVINGS is just one factor.

Comparing the price of just one helicopter at around \$1 million, versus a drone at about \$1500, makes a fleet of drone equipment appear affordable.

Shroud also lists operational capability, safety, live streaming ability and the enhanced level of documentation possible, as reasons to add drones as an option.

"Just think of what we could do, more safely and more efficiently?" said Shroud, going on to name just a few of the circumstances in which drones could be invaluable.

- ❖ Natural disaster and severe weather surveillance and documentation

- ❖ Crash reconstruction from all angles and high definition

- ❖ Search and rescue missions where "the drone can perform a programmed grid search to find a missing child or endangered adult"

- ❖ Hazardous materials incidents investigations

- ❖ Highway, stream and stormwater systems management

- ❖ Wildlife management

- ❖ Active shooter or other dangerous situations where the drone could get a closer look, without endangering law enforcement personnel

- ❖ Fire investigation and fighting, again, providing significant amounts of data, with less risk to personnel

Unmanned equipment could be used to

inspect infrastructure, checking power and gas lines, bridges, levees, roads, and more for damage or potential failures.

Shroud and Rohrer assured attendees that drone usage would be for "targeted use, not random surveillance activity."

The two men reported that privacy and civil rights were given priority when developing the draft operational manual and that there are related UAS laws already on the books, including the requirement of a search warrant in most instances in order to use UAS for law enforcement and public safety purposes.

"The ACLU has been a great resource and partner, helping to consider the public's rights in all aspects of UAS usage," said Rohrer.

The program would not be used to "target a person based solely on individual characteristics, such as, but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, national origin, religion or disability" or to "harass, intimidate or discriminate against any individual or group or conduct personal business or any other unauthorized use."

UAS pilots would require extensive training and be fully certified as required by law. The draft program is calling for a 3-person operational team for safety, with one operator, one observer, and one person who would maintain situational awareness.

At the McLean meeting, attendees expressed interest and generally approval for the proposal. A few questions, mostly related to personal drone use were asked, and a few suggestions were made on topics that could be included in the planned media/training even.

The complete draft manual and information about the proposed program are available at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/uas. The public is invited to provide feedback on this webpage by Feb. 8, for inclusion in the public record, although "your comments are always welcome at our email address UAS@fairfaxcounty.gov," said Shroud before the meeting concluded.

Human Trafficking: Monstrosity in Our Backyard

BY PAT HERRITY
SPRINGFIELD DISTRICT SUPERVISOR
(R)



Human 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 Prevention 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)



The 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.

By email:
north@connectionnewspapers.com

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Letters to the Editor
The Connection
1606 King St.
Alexandria VA 22314



LETTERS

Shutdown's Forgotten Victims: Government Contractors

To the Editor:

In an area like the Metro D.C., where government contracts make up a multi-billion dollar industry, it is surprising that with the exception of a couple of articles that received moderate attention, the mainstream media has largely ignored the impact of the shutdown on federal contractors. The world of a government shutdown can be full of peril for contractors.

There has never been much sympathy for contractors. On average, contractors make more money than federal workers because they normally do not have the advantage of

affordable health care and/or other benefits offered by the federal government to its direct employees.

Thousands of contractors will be sent home without pay for an indefinite period of time. Contractors inhabit a different world, and unlike furloughed federal employees, they will not be reimbursed for the time off they have been forced to take.

What does all this mean? An article in The Washington Post has reported that the shutdown could amount to a loss of \$100 million a day for local businesses throughout the city. Contractors provide

as much of their income to local businesses as their federal counterparts. Contractors, especially those contractors who work for small businesses, will be hit hard by this shutdown.

While the government will probably not take ownership of the effects it has produced on contractors, it is critical that they remember that they are an essential part of the federal workforce and many of them are weighed down by similar worries.

Michael H Jablin
McLean

College Scholarship Program Opens to Local Criminal Justice Majors

Fairfax County Sheriff's Office is participating in the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute (VSI) Scholarship Program for individuals pursuing an education in criminal justice. Full-time and part-time students from Fairfax County, the City of Fairfax, the Town of Herndon and the Town of Vienna who are attending a Virginia college or university for the 2019-2020 school year will be considered. Applications will be available on the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute website, <http://vasheriffsinstitute.org/scholarship/> by Jan. 31, 2019, and must be submitted online with all required information by May 1, 2019.

Scholarship applicants must email Kelly Hartle at the Sheriff's Office at sheriff@fairfaxcounty.gov Subject: Scholarship Application, no later than April 5, 2019, to schedule a meeting with Sheriff Kincaid regarding a required letter of recommendation by Kincaid on the student's behalf to go with the application. After awarding last year's scholarship winners, Kincaid said, "It's wonderful to meet young people who are academically accomplished, participate in extracurricular activities, work part-time, and give back in many ways to their communities."

Founded in 1981, VSI is a non-profit professional and educational organization. In 2018, the VSI Scholarship Committee awarded 71 scholarships to students across Virginia, \$1,000 for full-time students and \$500 for part-time students. As a member of VSI, Kincaid participates in scholarship fundraising efforts.

—MERCIA HOBSON



PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY

Fairfax County Sheriff Stacey A. Kincaid presents a 2018-2019 Virginia Sheriffs' Institute College Scholarship to Sesaly Barden, a graduate of South Lakes High School in Reston. Scholarship applications for 2019-2020 are available Jan. 31, 2019.

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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

Richard 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. Go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/OlderAdults. Click on the Golden Gazette.

In 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

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

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.

Questions?
Call 703-324-4444 or submit questions by email to 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.



PHOTOS BY TOM MANGAN

Staff of Chesterbrook Community displaying chocolate products for sale.

McLean Chocolate Festival Draws Record Crowd

The Rotary Club of McLean held its Eighth Annual Chocolate Festival on Sunday, Jan. 27 at the recently renovated McLean Community Center. Proceeds from the Chocolate Festival will go to local and international charities supported by the Rotary Club. Every Rotarian and other volunteers participated in sales and support for the event.

More than 25 chocolate purveyors sold

their wares to the record crowd. People could buy candy for later or consume other chocolate delights in dining areas at the festival. There was cultural entertainment from the Adagio School of Dance and Trillium Trio and many more.

American Heritage Chocolate presented a historical chocolate exhibit providing drinking chocolate like George Washington would have served. Participation was at a record level this year.



Rotarian Dr. Barry Byer (on left) demonstrating use of prescription medicine disposal kits given away by Rotary Club as a partial solution to the opioid crisis.



Rotarians Tom Pendleton, Bob Jansen, Carol Triplett and Vance Zavela manning the Marketplace.



Trillium Trio performing chamber music.



Festival attractions included Face Painting.

RSVP-Northern Virginia to Hold Valentine's Meet and Greet

RSVP-Northern Virginia, a program of Volunteer Fairfax, Volunteer Arlington and Volunteer Alexandria, is inviting volunteers to “spread the love” at its second annual Valentine’s Meet and Greet, Tuesday, Feb. 12, at Chesterbrook Residences in Falls Church.

RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program), the region’s largest volunteer network for people 55-years-old and better, provides personalized support to seniors and retirees who are seeking their ideal service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria.

During the meet and greet, participants will get to “spread the love” by assembling Valentine’s care packages



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Volunteers are invited to “spread the love” at Valentine’s Meet and Greet, Tuesday, Feb. 12.

and cards for local Meals on Wheels clients as well as for residents of Chesterbrook. New volunteers can also take part in a mini-RSVP orientation and hear from some of RSVP’s nonprofit partners about different volunteer opportunities needs in the area.

Chesterbrook Residences, located at 2030 Westmoreland Street, Falls Church, is sponsoring the event and will provide a free lunch to all registered participants.

This free event, which runs from noon to 2 p.m., is open to current RSVP volunteers and those 55 and better who are interested in becoming RSVP volunteers.

To sign up for the Feb. 12 meet and greet, email RSVP Volunteer Specialist Carly Hubicki at

chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org or call RSVP at 703-403-5360.

RSVP offers more than 300 meaningful opportunities that include helping seniors age in place, assisting local food pantries, and teaching financial literacy. Several of RSVP’s nonprofit partners are located in and around Falls Church, including the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia, Food for Others and Capital Caring.

RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group service projects and social gatherings.

To learn more about RSVP, please visit www.rsvpnova.org.

ENTERTAINMENT

Here's What's Happening at MCC!

Presented by The Alden



A Vital Theatre Production
"The Wizard of Oz"
Saturday, Feb. 2, 1 p.m.
\$15/\$10 MCC district residents

SUMMER CAMP REGISTRATION BEGINS!

Monday, Feb 4 for MCC residents
Monday, Feb 11 for all others



The Old Firehouse Teacher Work Day Trip



Skating/Snowboarding
Monday, Feb. 4, 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.
1440 Chain Bridge Rd.
\$140/\$120 MCC district residents
(without own equipment)

The Old Firehouse Friday Night Trip



Washington Wizards Basketball
Friday, Feb. 8, 4-10:30 p.m.
1440 Chain Bridge Rd.
\$50/\$40 MCC district residents

New Family Event!



Stories by Starlight
Friday, Feb. 8, 7-8 p.m.
\$20/family (Includes book purchase)

Presented by The Alden



John Eaton in Concert
"Jazz, Blues and Broadway"
Saturday, Feb. 9, 2 p.m.
\$30/\$20 MCC district residents

Presented by The Alden



Movies for Kids & Families
Wednesday, Feb. 13, 12:30 p.m.
Free admission



The McLean Community Center
www.mcleancenter.org
Home of the Alden Theatre
www.aldentheatre.org
703-790-0123, TTY: 711

1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean, VA 22101



The Wizard of Oz

Rediscover the joy of following the yellow brick road with Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tinman, and the Cowardly Lion as they travel through the eclectic world of Oz. Saturday, Feb. 2, 1 p.m. at The Alden Theatre at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. \$15/\$10 MCC tax district residents; family friendly; 60 minutes. Visit mcleancenter.org/alden-theatre for more.

CALENDAR

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

ONGOING

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

Free Tai Chi. Saturdays through March 30, from 7:55-9 a.m., Introduction and Beginners' Practice, meet in the Langley Hall at Trinity United Methodist Church, 1205 Dolley Madison Blvd., McLean. All are welcome. Call 703-759-9141 or visit www.FreeTaiChi.org for more.

Trivia Night. Tuesdays, 7 p.m. at Lost Dog Cafe - McLean, 1690 Anderson Road, McLean. Trivia featuring multiple winners and fun door prizes. Free to play. Visit www.facebook.com/EarthTriviaDc/ for more.

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

Bingo Night. Sundays, 4 p.m. Flame Room, Vienna Volunteer Fire Department, 400 Center St. S., Vienna. \$10. www.vvfd.org/bingo.html.

Gentle Yoga. Thursdays, 6:30 p.m. Emmaus United Church of Christ, 900 E Maple Ave. E., Vienna. Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Gentle Kundalini Yoga, one free introductory session, senior

discounts. Increase flexibility, improve breathing and health, reduce stress. Ravi Kaur has 15 years experience teaching yoga. \$15 per session. www.edimprovement.org. 571-213-3192.

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

THURSDAY/JAN. 31

Meet-and-Greet for History Lovers. 7 p.m. at Hunter House inside Nottoway Park, 9537 Courthouse Road, Vienna. The Fairfax County Park Authority is hosting a Meet and Greet for its Historic Sites Volunteer Corps. Park Authority staff will be there to talk about the things the Corps has done and will be doing in the coming year. To RSVP for the gathering, email Margaret.Canilang@fairfaxcounty.gov.

FRIDAY/FEB. 1

Live Music: Luke Brindley. 7:30 p.m. at Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave., East, Vienna. With special guest, singer-songwriter and upright bass player, Scott Mulvahill. \$18. Call 703-255-1566 or visit www.jamminjava.com for more.

FRIDAY-SUNDAY/FEB. 1-3

"Peter Pan." Friday-Saturday, 8 p.m.; Saturday-Sunday, 2 p.m. at Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., SE, Vienna. Presented by the Vienna Theatre Company and Vienna Department of Parks and Recreation. In this adaptation, based on the original J.M. Barrie script, Peter will be portrayed as a girl by a female actress. The dynamics change, but

the story remains the same. General admission is \$14. Tickets may be purchased online at www.viennatheatrecompany.com/ordering-tickets-online/, in advance at the Vienna Community Center or at the door by cash, credit card or check prior to each to each performance (if seats are still available). Visit www.viennatheatrecompany.com.

SATURDAY/FEB. 2

"The Wizard of Oz." 1 p.m. at The Alden Theatre at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Rediscover the joy of following the yellow brick road with Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tinman, and the Cowardly Lion as they travel through the eclectic world of Oz. \$15/\$10 MCC tax district residents; family friendly; 60 minutes. Visit mcleancenter.org/alden-theatre.

SUNDAY/FEB. 3

Lox and Lecture: "The Island of Roses - Tragedy in Paradise." 11:45 a.m. at Temple Rodef Shalom, 2100 Westmoreland St., Falls Church. Through the memories of her mother, family friends and additional archival material, Rebecca Samona reconstructs the little known story of the life of the Jews of Rhodes, an Italian colony. Following their deportation to Auschwitz in July 1944 and the destruction of the community, the handful of survivors kept alive the memories of this centuries-old culture, and conveyed the stories to their descendants. There will be a question and answer session after the movie. Light bagel and lox brunch prior to the movie. WoTRS members \$7, non-WoTRS members \$10. RSVP by Jan. 10 at wotrsloxlecturejan2019.eventbrite.com. Email juleskrac@aol.com or more.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 6

Newcomers and Neighbors Coffee.

ENTERTAINMENT

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at the McLean Project for the Arts, 1446 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. McLean Newcomers and Neighbors will host a coffee for its members and those who might be interested in joining. Visit www.McLeanNewcomers.org.

FRIDAY/FEB. 8

Concert Chorus Debut Performance

Performance. 8 p.m. at St. Thomas More Cathedral, 3901 Cathedral Lane, Arlington. Oakcrest School's Concert Chorus will perform its first ever full-length concert with the premier of an original piece composed for them by Berklee College of Music Composition Professor Arnold Friedman – a setting of the poem "Pied Beauty" by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Meet the performers at a post-concert reception. Visit cathedralstm.org/music-ministries/cathedral-concerts.



Concert Chorus Debut Performance

Vienna's Oakcrest School's Concert Chorus will perform its first ever full-length concert with the premier of an original piece composed for them by Berklee College of Music Composition Professor Arnold Friedman – a setting of the poem "Pied Beauty" by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Friday, Feb. 8, 8 p.m. at St. Thomas More Cathedral, 3901 Cathedral Lane, Arlington. Meet the performers at a post-concert reception. Visit www.cathedralstm.org/music-ministries/cathedral-concerts.

SATURDAY/FEB. 9

Tea Seminar – The Sweet Side of Tea

1-3 p.m. at Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. This interactive focused tasting seminar explores the many flavors of honey and maple syrup and how they can enhance a variety of green, black, and herbal teas. Taste some treats made with these three straight from nature ingredients. A take home tea sampler included. \$35 per person. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/colvin-run-mill to register.

SUNDAY/FEB. 10

Maple Syrup Fresh from the Trees

Noon-2 p.m. at Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. See sap dripping into collection pans on the trees, and discover the surprising amount of sap it takes to make just a little syrup. Taste the combination of maple syrup over cornbread made from the mill's cornmeal, while supplies last. \$5 per person for visitors age 3-adult. No reservations are required. This is an outdoor program, dress for the weather. Call 703-759-2771 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/colvin-run-mill.

Winter Concerts: Ayreheart

4 and 6 p.m. seatings at The Old Brogue Irish Pub, 760-C Walker Road, Great Falls. The Old Brogue Irish Pub of Great Falls, VA and Barnaby Productions, Inc. present the 30th season of family friendly, Winter Traditional Celtic Concerts performed in a listening room by the fireside. Tickets must be purchased in advance at oldbrogue.com: \$18 general admission; \$12 children.

Annual Salzman Lecture

6 p.m. in the Sanctuary at Lewinsville Presbyterian Church, 1724 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. This year's speaker will be Susan Wharton Gates, PhD, author of "Days of Slaughter: Inside the Fall of Freddie Mac – and Why It Could Happen Again." She will share experiences and insights as a former vice president of public policy at Freddie Mac in the lead up to the 30-percent collapse of house prices and subsequent government takeover of her company in 2008. Visit www.lewinsville.org for more.

All Night Grad Party Fundraiser

7 p.m. in the Langley High School auditorium, 6520 Georgetown Pike, McLean. The Capitol Steps use song parodies and skits to bring bipartisan levity to major issues of the day. Audience members will need to be well-versed in current events to keep up with the humor, as it's fast, fresh, and funny. Proceeds from the show will help to pay for Langley's Class of 2019 All Night Grad Party. Open to the general public. Tickets are \$35 each at www.ptsalangley.org/all-night-grad-party, under the ANGP Capitol Steps

banner, or on Brown Paper Tickets, lms19capitolstepsfundraiser.bpt.com.

fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/turner-farm.

TUESDAY/FEB. 12

Tibbetts Award Dinner

6:30 p.m. at The Old Brogue, 760-C Walker Road, Great Falls. The Great Falls Historical Society will honor Jacquie Olin as the 2019 Tibbetts Award Honoree. The Society applauds Olin's advocacy on behalf of numerous community projects in Great Falls for more than 48 years. The award will be presented at the Annual Tibbetts Award Dinner. Register by Feb. 6. Visit www.gfhs.org for more.

McLean Historical Society Meeting

7:30 p.m. in the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Avenue, McLean. The program will feature world renown historian John Gaudet who will discuss "The Origins of Ancient Paper and the First Bible." Everyone is welcome. Contact Carole Herrick at 703-356-8223 for more.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 13

Movie Series: New Disney Classics

12:30 p.m. at The Alden Community Hall, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The Alden is kicking off a new film series with "new Disney Classics" – those that were loved during the 1990s. The films will be shown at 12:30 p.m. on the 2nd Wednesday of the month through June. Free admission. Visit mcleancenter.org/performing-arts for more.

SATURDAY/FEB. 16

Model Railroaders Open House

1-5 p.m. at the Vienna Depot, 231 Dominion Road NE. Northern Virginia Model Railroaders hold an open house at the Vienna Depot each month and on Vienna celebration days, including Viva! Vienna and the Vienna Holiday Stroll. Free. Call 703-938-5157 or visit www.nvmr.org.

Astronomy Festival

6-9 p.m. at Turner Farm, 925 Springvale Road, Great Falls. After the sun sets, soak up some starshine at an "Astronomy Festival" that will include guided stargazing and telescope viewing. Listen to ancient stories about the constellations around the campfire, and participate in other activities and games throughout the evening. \$8 per person. Hot chocolate and snacks will be available for purchase. Canceled if it rains or snows. Call 703-324-8618 or visit

FRIDAY/FEB. 22

Waterfowl Wintering Along the Potomac

9-11 a.m. at Riverbend Park, 8700 Potomac Hills St., Great Falls. Fairfax County is an attractive spot for waterfowl that don't mind a little cold. Take the "Winter Waterfowl Hike" at Riverbend Park to see what avian creatures are making their residence here over the winter. Hike with a naturalist at the park to search for winter waterfowl along the Upper Potomac River. Bring binoculars and spotting scopes. For participants age 14-adult. \$8 per person. Call 703-759-9018 or visit fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend.

BRAWS Hosts Mardi Bras

At Westwood Country Club, 800 Maple Ave. E, Vienna. More than 500 guests are expected at Mardi Bras, which is the largest annual fundraiser for BRAWS, a volunteer-driven, community-based 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that provides homeless women and children with necessities including new bras and underwear as well as menstrual supplies. Tickets are on sale now at www.braws.org/mardi-bras-2019.html for \$100, which includes hors d'oeuvres, two drinks, raffles, silent auction, music, photo booth, swag bags, special guests and more. BRAWS is seeking event sponsorships as well as donations of items for the raffles and silent auction. More information can be found at www.braws.org.

SATURDAY/FEB. 23

Touch Visitors from Space

11 a.m.-noon at Observatory Park at Turner Farm, 925 Springvale Road, Great Falls. "Meteorites: Explore Visitors from Space" will be held in the roll-top observatory classroom. Designed for participants age 5-11 and runs from 11 a.m. to noon. \$8 per person. Call 703-324-8618 or visit fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/turner-farm.

The Okee Dokee Brothers

1 p.m., 4 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. At The Alden, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Cost is \$20/\$15 MCC district residents. As childhood friends growing up in Denver, CO, Joe Mailander and Justin Lansing were always exploring the outdoors. Now, as the Grammy Award-winning Okee Dokee Brothers, they have put this passion for the outdoors at the heart of their Americana Folk music. Visit www.mcleancenter.org.

CALL FOR CANDIDATES

McLEAN COMMUNITY CENTER
2019 GOVERNING BOARD ELECTION



Want to be a community leader?

Run for a seat on our governing board!

We're looking for residents of Small District 1A, Dranesville, who wish to serve their community by playing a lead role in helping to carry out MCC's mission.

Candidate Petition Packets may be picked up at the Center starting January 22.

Visit the Center at: 1234 INGLESIDE AVE., MCLEAN, VA 22101

Call: 703-790-0123, TTY: 711 Email: ELECTIONS@MCLEANCENTER.ORG

Visit: [HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/MCLEAN-CENTER-ELECTION](https://tinyurl.com/mclean-center-election)



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NEWS

Pay Raise Promise Amid Protest

**Legislators announce
5 percent pay raise
for teachers.**

BY CORRINE FIZER
CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

As hundreds of teachers and supporters from around the state marched to the Virginia Capitol to call for higher salaries and more funding for public schools, legislative leaders announced Monday, Jan. 28, that they would include a 5 percent pay raise for teachers in the state budget.

Armed with red coats, scarves and signs, participants of all ages gathered in Monroe Park for a small rally. Then they marched to the Capitol as a girl riding in the back of a small red wagon used a microphone and handheld speaker to lead their chants.

The marchers gathered on the Capitol grounds to hear community leaders protest what they see as inadequate funding for public education.

Rodney Robinson, Virginia's Teacher of the Year, said Amazon will receive nearly \$3.5 billion in public subsidies from New York, Virginia and Tennessee to locate facilities in those states. Virginia's state government and Arlington County offered more than \$570 million in direct subsidies and about \$220 million in transportation improvements to entice Amazon to put an East Coast headquarters near Reagan National Airport in Crystal City.

Robinson said the money Amazon will get could "pay for more teachers, counselors and 21st-century school buildings that are not infested with roaches, rats and mold."

The Virginia Education Association, which represents the state's teachers, organized the "Red4Ed" rally. The VEA says Virginia ranks 34th among the states in teacher pay. The average annual teacher salary in Virginia is \$51,265 — more than \$9, 200 below the national average, according to the association.

According to the Richmond School Board, 1 in 5 educators must take a second job to make ends meet.

Liz Holmes, a second-grade teacher at Greenville Elementary School in Warrenton, said she has not had a raise in 11 years. Holmes came to the march to express her frustration over the lack of "fair compensation" in her workplace.

"We are losing qualified teachers every year to surrounding counties that pay higher wages," Holmes said, holding a picture of her and her students. "Enough is enough."

As the teachers held their demonstration, Republican lawmakers who control the House of Delegates announced that they would include a 5 percent raise for teachers in the state budget they plan to release on Sunday. Del. Steve Landes, R-Augusta, made the announcement in a speech on the House floor.

"Virginia has some of the finest teachers in the country and that has led to Virginia students consistently outperforming nationwide peers on standardized tests, college admissions, and graduate rates," said Landes, vice chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. "To maintain that success we must ensure our teachers are fairly compensated and know the hard work they do each and every day is greatly appreciated."

The committee's chairman, Republican Del. Chris Jones of Suffolk, said the proposed budget would increase teachers' salaries without raising taxes. "Un-



PHOTO BY CORRINE FIZER/CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE
Teachers and supporters march in Richmond seeking more funding for education.

"Virginia has some of the finest teachers in the country and that has led to Virginia students consistently outperforming nationwide peers on standardized tests, college admissions, and graduate rates."

—Del. Steve Landes, R-Augusta

der conservative leadership in the House of Delegates, this will be the fourth teacher pay raise in the last six years," he said.

"I am proud of Chairman Jones and Vice Chairman Landes for the hard work and dedication they have shown to ensuring our teachers know how much they are appreciated in the Commonwealth," said House Speaker Kirk Cox, a retired high school government teacher.

"As a public school teacher for 30 years, I know how hard teachers work to educate Virginia's future leaders. We must make it a priority to keep great teachers in the classroom and that starts with making sure our teachers are fairly compensated."

Democrats are already on board with the 5 percent pay raise for teachers. In the two-year budget adopted by the General Assembly in 2018, teachers were scheduled to receive a 3 percent salary increase on July 1. In his proposed revision of the budget, Gov. Ralph Northam recommended awarding teachers an additional 2 percent raise.

Northam, a Democrat, reiterated that proposal at a meeting of the Virginia School Board Association last week, calling it "the largest one-time pay raise for teachers in over 15 years."

But Virginia teachers say that their salaries are more than 10 percent below the national average — and that the planned raise does not close the gap.

"It's a start," Holmes said. "But it's not enough."

BULLETIN

Submit civic/community announcements at 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.

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 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. Send 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.

- Wednesday, Jan. 30, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Braddock Hall – Kings Park Library, 9002 Burke Lake Road, Burke.
- Monday, Feb. 4, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Mason District Governmental Center, Community Room, 6507 Columbia Pike, Annandale, 22003

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 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 for contest details and to download the applications. Email 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 present “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 for more or to register.

Prospective Parents’ Luncheon. Noon-2 at

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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.

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