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Burke CONNECTION

WELLBEING

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Braddock Supervisor John Cook addresses the crowd at Good Shepherd Church on Monday, Feb. 4 in a meeting focusing on transportation issues related to the proposed new developments.

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Promoting Early Learning

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Sheltering Homeless Neighbors

Extreme cold sees increased need.

BY ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

The polar vortex swept down upon the region all last week, with near-record cold temperatures and accumulations of snow and ice to make life less-than-pleasant.

For most, the effects of that arctic blast were at worst uncomfortable and annoying, causing chaotic schedule changes with school closures and hazardous road conditions, but at least most were able to turn up the thermostats in their homes, huddle around fireplaces, or turn on the electric blankets and space heaters to keep themselves cozy despite the elements at play outside.

For some of area neighbors, however — like the homeless and the more vulnerable — the effects of winter weather are more dire, even life-threatening.

Even before the worst of the weather hit the region, Fairfax County Police were investigating three apparent weather-related deaths. An 86-year-old resident of a Reston senior living facility was found outside the housing center by local police officers, called in to assist in a search when the elderly woman was determined to be missing.

A 47-year-old man, with no fixed address, was found asleep in the laundry room of an apartment complex. He was pronounced dead by Fairfax County Fire and Rescue when they arrived on the scene.

On Jan. 14, officers arrived at the assisted living center in Great Falls, responding to a CPR call for an 88-year-old resident who was found outside the facility and succumbed to the effects of the cold.

"It doesn't take long for a person to become endangered by exposure to cold weather," said Brenda Dushko.

Dushko is the director of development for FACETS, a nonprofit that has been serving our neighbors in need since 2003 and a founding and active partner in the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness.

FACETS works year-round to help break the cycle of poverty and homelessness, but a major portion of their mission is dedicated to running the Hypothermia Prevention and Response Program for the county's Human Services Region 4 - Western County/Fairfax and Centreville areas.

HYPOTHERMIA is a life-threatening condition, brought on when the body temperature drops below 95 degrees — not far below the average normal temperature. With a warm coat, gloves and a hat, a warm car to travel in and a warm home to avoid prolonged exposure to the cold, hypothermia



PHOTO BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION

Some of the St. Christopher's Episcopal Church hypothermia shelter volunteers (from left): Rev. Peter Ackerman, Zach Manning, Christina Manning, Kathy Barnard, Sarah Wilsey, David Wilsey, Debbie Brant, and Pam Branstetter.

Where To Find Help

Several other partners join FACETS in the mission to prevent and end homelessness and to keep the homeless from being another Fairfax County Police Department statistic during the cold.

In **Human Services Region 1**— the South County — **New Hope Housing** operates the Eleanor U. Kennedy Shelter in Ft. Belvoir as well as managing the temporary shelters in the area. Call 703-799-0200 or visit the website www.newhopehousing.org/programs/shelter for more information on Region 1 assistance.

Human Services Region 2— Eastern County/Falls Church/Annandale — is also served by **New Hope Housing** with a year-round shelter at Bailey's Crossroads Community Shelter and the rotating faith community facilities. Call 703-820-7621 or the New Hope Housing website.

doesn't present a problem for most.

"But if you spend much of your time outdoors, looking for a warm place to stay, that's another story," said Dushko. "Now imagine being outside for hours overnight and you can quickly see why our homeless are in extreme danger, even more than usual, during these winter months."

Dushko spoke on Friday, Feb. 1, during a tour of the temporary hypothermia shelter at St. Christopher's Episcopal Church on Hanover Lane in Springfield.

"The good people of St. Christopher's have been running their week-long shelter as part of the program for 15 years, right from the very beginning," she said.

From November through March each year, between 30-45 faith communities gather a small army of volunteer congregants and open their doors for a seven-day stretch to offer hot meals, a warm place to sleep, other items of need, and companionship.

Christina Manning is one of the St. Christopher volunteers and she has been giving her time to this cause for all 15 years that

Human Services Region 3— North County/Reston and Herndon is served by **Cornerstones** operating the Hypothermia Program and the year-round Embury Rucker Community Shelter. See the website at www.cornerstonesva.org or call 703-437-1975.

The City of Falls Church is also under the assistance umbrella of **New Hope Housing** with contact available through the website or by calling 703-799-0200.

Visiting the Fairfax County website for the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness will also yield related information and resources.

Citizens are urged to check on vulnerable relatives and neighbors. When seeing someone who is unsheltered and may be in distress, call the non-emergency police phone number at 703-691-2131 (TTY 711) and a police officer will respond and so a wellness check on the individual in question, transporting them for medical assistance or to shelter as required.

the church has been involved.

"It's really just helping out a friend," she said in between stirring a steaming pot on the church's kitchen stove, unwrapping other food items, and mixing up some macaroni and cheese. "So many of us are just one step away from being in the same situation. I talk with a lot of our visitors who have full-time jobs, but circumstances and the lack of affordable housing in our area have brought them to this place."

Volunteering runs in the family, as Manning was joined in her kitchen duties by her 15-year-old son, Zach. "He's been coming here since before he was actually born," laughed Manning, "then he came in his stroller, and eventually he became a full-blown helper."

On this night at St. Christopher's, Zach wasn't the only young person doing their part to help others: 16-year-old Sarah Wilsey was also doing food preparation at the steel kitchen work table, while her father, David Wilsey, worked the roux on the stove.

"The people who come here, they are just

like us, just in a bad situation," said Sarah. Dad David has been volunteering at the St. Christopher's shelter event for the last 10 years. "This is something I can do to give back, to help others — and I can cook."

Katy Dunlap, who organizes St. Christopher's turn as a shelter, says it takes about 15 people per day to keep things running. In addition to those who cook, serve and clean, there are people who help with intake, the overnight volunteers who stay with the guests, and those "who just come for a while to talk to our visitors."

NOT EVERYONE wants to talk, but some do and seem to just be happy to have a conversation, to be seen and listened to."

"J" — a young woman who is hampered by a brain injury that affects her memory and other cognitive abilities — was shyly willing to talk a bit about herself. "J" who was once employed as a teacher and also worked in retail, has been moving from shelter to shelter since the cold weather descended.

"I am really trying to make it, to find a stable living situation and get back to work," she said. She is being aided in her endeavours by a FACETS caseworker, but the fact that she was turned down initially for any disability assistance is making her transition to "normal life" (as she puts it) difficult to say the least. "But I won't give up. And I really appreciate all these people who care and help."

"A" was also employed before, working for a grocery store. "It was pretty good. I liked it." He even had housing accommodation, but was suddenly left homeless again when a change at the place where he lived left no room for him. Now on dialysis, "A" is back on the streets, but working with a case manager and hopeful that his situation will improve. He, too, says he is grateful for the people who open their doors to help.

"It gets lonely sometimes, people don't want to see you. Some are afraid of you, so it's nice to be here, have a good meal and people to talk with."

The lay volunteers at the participating churches are supported by trained FACETS staff and volunteers, also on sight overnight and offering guidance and resources to the clients. During the season, Dushko noted that some 3,800 volunteers donate more than 33,000 hours to running the shelters, providing transportation and other services to their neighbors in need.

The extreme cold has seen the numbers of clients at all of the county's shelters, both the permanent and the temporary, rise sharply, Dushko reported. Last year, the county assisted almost 1,100 people in need of shelter during the winter months.

"We had about 40 people here last night," said St. Christopher's pastor, Peter Ackerman, and a line had already formed outside the doors by 4:30, although the official opening hours don't begin until 5 p.m.

OPINION

Week of Absurdities

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

The 2019 session of the General Assembly has reached its mid-point, or crossover, when the two houses start to consider bills that have survived the other house. It also represents the final action on many bills giving an indication of what the ultimate legislation for the session is likely to be. In the back of most legislators' minds is the fact that when the legislature adjourns *sine die* (until another day) the election season will begin. The thought of going home to meet their voters motivates many votes. After all, that is the way it should be in a representative democracy. The results, however, create some absurdities.

Republicans appear to be planning to focus once again on abortion. Although *Roe v Wade* decided in 1973 was supposed to set the rules for abortions, the debate still goes on. This week in a massive media campaign linked to fundraising, the opponents accused Governor

Ralph Northam who is a pediatrician and first term Delegate Kathy Tran, a mother of four the youngest of whom she was nursing during session last year, of favoring infanticide! I witnessed the verbal ambush by some of the most skilled lawyers in the House who with some editing of the tape of their cross-examination of her created a false impression of her bill and what it did. Calling the episode absurd is a mild description; I think Governor Northam came closer to an accurate description when he called it disgusting. (Read more at https://wapo.st/2GduVpd?tid=ss_mail&utm_term=.814210c15403)

Thirty-seven states have ratified the Equal Rights Amendment. It is looking doubtful that Virginia will join that group this year. In floor speeches on the amendment one of the women opposing the amendment said that she did not need "words on a piece of paper" to get what she wanted.

Bills that would have created an independent redistricting commission including my perennial bill have been defeated in the House. A bill introduced by the Speaker of the House that would create a commission to redistrict the legislature is far from independent in that it still has legis-

lators picking their voters in order to protect incumbents and hold onto the majority. If the bill makes it through the legislature it will be amended or vetoed by the governor. It remains difficult for the majority to play fair especially when it holds control by such a slim sliver of power. A two-vote shift in both houses would put Democrats in charge of the legislature.

Major divisions continue to exist between the parties on finalizing the budget. Republicans favor a plan that continues the federal approach of giving tax breaks to those with the highest income. My bill to establish a partially refundable Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) was defeated. About half the states have used an EITC to help raise the income of working families. There is a slight possibility that Governor Northam could get the EITC in a compromise budget as he is a strong proponent of it.

Several weeks remain for the legislature to work its will. Some good bills are passing that will be favorable to the people of the Commonwealth, and I will discuss these in future columns. With an election looming in the fall, we may still see more absurdities!

Be Part of the Pet Connection

The Pet Connection, a twice-yearly special edition, will publish the last week of February, and photos and stories of your pets with you and your family should be submitted by Friday, Feb. 22.

We invite you to send stories about your pets, photos of you and

your family with your cats, dogs, llamas, alpacas, ponies, hamsters, snakes, lizards, frogs, rabbits, or whatever other creatures share your life with you.

Tell us the story of a special bond between a child and a dog, the story of how you came to adopt

your pet, or examples of amazing feats of your creatures.

Just a cute photo is fine too. Our favorite pictures include both pets and humans.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Assistance League Receives Grant

To the Editor:

Assistance League of Northern Virginia recognizes The Allstate Foundation and Allstate volunteers for being positive forces for change in our community. Twenty-two Allstate volunteers came together to host a day of community service that enabled the all-volunteer, non-profit organization to secure a \$22,000 Helping Hands Grant.

Allstate volunteers, including David Akers, Christine Angles, Rudolf Alston, Jose Bernal, David Bowen, Sharon Driscoll, Shelley Driscoll, Kevin Dupree, Matthew Henaghan, Joyia Lytle, Mike Mazri, Sharon Neighoff, Jason Passarell, Ricardo Paz Soldan, Christopher Ruby, Tonya Semones, Jason Sengpiehl, William Simkins, Miguel Villegas, Michael Wallach, William Waughn and Don Wright, gave their time to support the nonprofit's program that reduces hunger in our vulnerable communities.

For more than 60 years, the Allstate Foundation has been bringing out the good in millions of lives, committing financial and human resources where they can make the most impact. Weekend Food for Kids was selected as the featured service activity for the "Feed Your Future Volunteer Relay" that took place in Washington, D.C., in October 2018. Assistance League was honored to be included as a partner providing innovative and lasting solutions to enhance the community's well-being.

The Allstate Foundation supports the causes that its employees care about most. Allstate executives and regional advisory board members, including exclusive agents and exclusive financial specialists from D.C., Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia, participated in a relay race to pack more than 500 bags of nonperishable food for less advantaged children in our region.

Allstate senior communication consultant, Caitlyn Barron, and Allstate exclusive agent, Christine Angles, organized the group activity and orchestrated the

group grant.

"This is all beyond outstanding! We are so proud to hear that our efforts benefited some of the most vulnerable in our society - our children," said Shaundra Turner Jones, Allstate corporate relations manager. "This impactful event has our hearts full and we look forward to being involved in many more," she added.

The Allstate Foundation Helping Hands Grant will help Assistance League advance its mission to "transform the lives of children and strengthen our community. The funds will be used to purchase three-months' worth of food for underprivileged children in six partner schools enrolled in the 2019-20 Weekend Food for Kids program.

Allstate Foundation and Allstate volunteers bring out the good in their community, helping organizations like Assistance League bring important programs to those most in need. To learn more, visit www.alnv.org.

Karen Smith Amster
VP Resource Development
Assistance League of Northern Virginia

Extremely Disappointed

To the Editor:

I graduated from college in 1986. I went to the University of Mississippi my freshman year and half of my sophomore year. My freshman year (1982), the school was still waving Confederate flags at football games and was in the process of transitioning to using a flag that just said, "Ole Miss" in red on a blue background. To protest, the Ku Klux Klan showed up at at least one football game. It was terrifying. The KKK is not funny. Not even a little bit.

I am extremely disappointed to discover that Mr. Northam participated in photo wearing Blackface with someone in a KKK outfit. He knew better. I voted for Mr. Northam, so this makes the discovery even more painful.

Everyone does stupid things in college. This was not stupid. It was mean and it wasn't funny. Mr. Northam should resign in order to show respect for his Black constituents and, really, all Virginia voters.

Amy Dickson
Springfield

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PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

Supervisor Cook manned the mike, answering questions from the audience.

Senior and Student Housing Eyed for Braddock Corridor

Transportation the focus of the meeting at Good Shepherd.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

With any project along Braddock Road, transportation has always been at the top of the list on the agenda. The “Erickson Living Proposal for the NVTC Site,” is no different, and transportation was the topic at the meeting on Monday, Feb. 4 at the Good Shepherd Church where Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock) hosted a panel of engineers and county officials to lay out what might be coming with this project.

The meeting is not the first about a land use project that will involve 1050 senior independent living units and 175 senior assisted living units, a recreational facility and parking, all on the property that was previously the Northern Virginia Training Center. “Tonight we’re here to talk about transportation,” Cook said.

The Erickson plan will use the existing site and the existing entrances and exits onto Braddock Road, with a modification here and there. Since the NVTC did not generate as much traffic as say a townhouse development of the same size, the Erickson project is planned to have the same traffic impacts, with seniors and assisted care tenants that don’t drive as much. William Johnson, a traffic engineer with Wells & Associates, discussed the traffic on Braddock Road and their plan, using Greenspring Village as a good comparison. Greenspring is another Erickson property in Springfield. “We actually took counts at the existing Greenspring, a pretty sharp drop around four, five or six p.m.” he said.

THE AUDIENCE didn’t go for some of his analysis, or his traffic simulation. For example, when he talked about the peak traffic at five p.m., a lot of moans and laughter could be heard in the audience.

“The former NVTC, that generated trips comparable to what we’re programming here,” he said.

The intersections at Roberts Road, Burke Center Parkway, Twinbrook Shopping Center and Herrend Place were all looked at. With the existing conditions, “there is no break in traffic,” said someone from the audience. Judith Chamot of Burke was at the



The auditorium at the Good Shepherd Church had about 150 people.

meeting to hear more about the recreation center part of the project, and looked at the traffic figures with doubt. “I have very little faith in the traffic analysis,” she said.

The Erickson Living Proposal is just one project that is being proposed for the Braddock Road corridor. There is also “One University,” housing near the Braddock and Route 123 that is proposing 100 senior affordable housing units for residents aged 62 and older; a second part with 140 affordable multi-family units; and another part is a five-story structure with up to 362 units (designed specifically for 819 college students), their information stated, with a structured garage for 800+ parking spaces.

THE COMBINATION of these two projects could add more than 2,000 additional cars to Braddock Road and area traffic.

Jim and Michelle McDaniel came from Springfield to hear about the project and additional options for senior living. “We need more different types of housing for aging seniors,” Jim McDaniel said. “This offers an opportunity to live without worries of shoveling snow or a leaky faucet,” he said. There is a demand too, according to the Erickson official, who said there was currently a wait list of 1,200 people for Greenspring Village.

Nancy Grant with the Kings Park West HOA was gathering information to take back to the HOA. “They’ve been talking about all kinds of things,” she said. “Early on, they were talking about a shopping center,” she said.

Cook and other officials are about half-way through this process with these two projects. They are gathering feedback and will have a zoning hearing in June.

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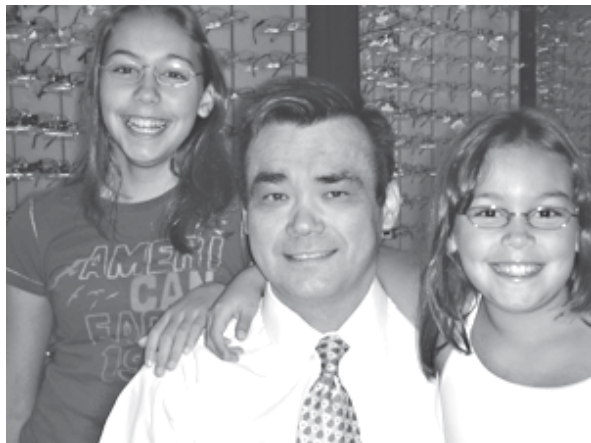
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WELLBEING

American Heart Month

Making healthy diet and exercise choices are two keys to preventing heart disease.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

Each time the door bell rang, a guest arrived, wearing red and bringing with her a new flavorful dish with an aroma that filled the already pungent air in Cassandra Pope's Arlington home. One by one friends strolled through the living room and into the kitchen bearing dishes like balsamic-grilled chicken breast, curried cauliflower steak and freshly made hummus. They had arrived for a potluck dinner and the theme that evening was heart health.

"My father died of a heart attack when he was 62, and when he was 57 he had a stroke," said Pope. "All nine of his siblings had massive heart attacks and all of them died of a heart-related illness. So I know that I need to focus eating better and exercising and losing weight. My friends always get together for dinner about once or twice a month and usually we have a theme. For February, we decided to combine Valentine's Day and heart health. We exchanged recipes so that we all have a stash of new recipes to try."

Cardiovascular disease remains one of the leading cause of death in the United States, and after decades of a steady decline in this country, it is once again on the rise, according to a study by the American Heart Association. The research also shows that approximately 80 percent of all cardiovascular disease can be prevented by adopting a healthy lifestyle and controlling high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol. During February, American Heart Month, health care professionals are working to raise awareness of the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices and managing their health conditions.

"February is also Black History Month and these two recognitions go hand-in-hand," said Nikkia Wilkens, Fairfax County Health Department community outreach professional. "African Americans have some of the highest rates of hypertension and heart disease, [but] with the right steps, we can improve our heart health."

Some of the heart-smart lifestyle adjustments that Wilkens and other health care professionals advise include staying active and exercising regularly and monitoring one's salt intake. "Incorporate movement into your everyday activities, such as taking the stairs instead of an elevator," said Wilkens. "Maintain a healthy diet and skip the fried foods, and eat lots of



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Finding creative but tasteful ways to add vibrantly colored fruit and vegetables to one's diet can help prevent heart disease.

fruits and vegetables. Commit to eight hours [of sleep] a night and drink eight glasses of water each day.”

While African-American have one of the highest rates of heart disease, the American Heart Association reports that anyone at any age can be affected by cardiovascular diseases and 80 percent of cardiac events can be prevented.

“Even making small changes like getting 30 minutes of exercise a day can improve not just your heart health, but your overall health as well,” said fitness trainer Brendan Moore. “Find a type of exercise that you enjoy enough to do for 30 minutes that also gets you to break a sweat and do it everyday. The important thing is that you get your heart rate up. If you start to break a sweat, you know that you’re exerting enough energy to have an impact.”

Small dietary changes can be made gradually. "Watching your salt intake is really important," said dietician Caroline Knowles. "There are so many ways to prepare meals by using spices instead of salt so that you don't compromise the taste. With slow cookers and instant cookers there are so many options that you no longer have to fry food to enjoy that satisfying taste."

Focus on Safer Driving

Bans on holding cellphones while driving.

BY ANDREW GIONFRIDDO
CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

The Virginia Senate and House of Delegates on Tuesday, Feb. 5, each passed bills prohibiting motorists from touching their cellphones while driving.

The Senate approved SB 1341 on a vote of 34-6, and the House passed HB 1811, 69-27. The bills would explicitly ban using a hand-held communication device, unless it is in hands-free mode, while operating a vehicle.

State law currently prohibits only reading email or text messages or manually entering letters or text in a hand-held personal communications device while driving. The legislation would extend that ban to using the device for making phone calls, checking social media and other purposes.

"It is unlawful for any person, while driving a moving motor vehicle on the highways in the Commonwealth, to hold a handheld personal communications device," the bills state.

Drivers would still be able to operate their phones if they are lawfully parked or stopped or are reporting an emergency.

The chief sponsors of the House bill were Republican Dels. Christopher Collins of

Frederick County and Michael Webert of Fauquier County and Democratic Del. Michael Mullin of Newport News.

Speaking as a former police officer, Collins said the existing law needed improvements.

"Our current texting while driving statute has just not been enforced," he said. "The enforcement numbers went way down during the last several years."

The penalty for a first offense is a \$125 fine that rises to \$250 for a second or subsequent violation.

"This is going to be straight up — if you have your phone in your hand, you are in violation of a law," Collins said.

The Senate bill was sponsored by Republican Sens. Richard Stuart of King George County and Frank Wagner of Virginia Beach and Democratic Sen. Scott Surovell of Fairfax. Under the legislation, the ban on using hand-held devices would not apply to citizens band radios. The bills also would exempt hand-held communication devices that are physically connected to the vehicle and used for navigation or audio transmissions. Although the House and Senate bills are identical, the legislation still hasn't cleared the final hurdles. Now, the House must pass the Senate bill, or the Senate must pass the House bill, and then the governor must sign the legislation.



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ONGOING

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 paintings, drawings, glass works, clay works and fiber art created in Workhouse's classes and workshops. Call 703-584-2900 or visit 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 for more.

Winter Golf. Through Feb. 28, skip the traffic with the Afternoon Drive special at the heated and covered ranges at Burke Lake Golf Center and the newly renovated Oak Marr Golf Complex. All buckets are \$2 off, Monday-Thursday, 4 p.m. until closing. Or try the indoor studio at Pinecrest Golf Course's Valis Family Golf Learning Center. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/golf.

Fine Arts Enrichment Camps. The Youth Arts Camp & Education Outreach (ages 13-17) programs at the Workhouse provide rich experiences in fine arts year-round. Campers work alongside professional artists and professional educators to excel in different mediums, learning various techniques, and creating quality artwork with every visit. Find upcoming camps at reservations.workhousearts.org.

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 for more.

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.

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

Sparkling Wit, Magical Love Potion

Virginia Opera brings 'The Elixir of Love' to the Center for the Arts.

BY DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

Time for some lightening up courtesy of the Virginia Opera. The comic opera "The Elixir of Love" by Gaetano Donizetti will be bringing a plentitude of remedies for the February cold. "Elixir" is an operatic romantic comedy about the pursuit of love with help from a very special tonic.

Donizetti's charming "The Elixir of Love" is performed in the bel canto opera style in which expressive voices transport the audience into a bubbly, vibrant tale of comedic misunderstandings and endearing characters.

What is "The Elixir of Love" about? It is centered upon a shy peasant named Nemorino who is secretly enthralled with a rather feisty socialite Adina. Alas, Adina has her eyes on a dashing military man, Sergeant Belcore. Nemorino decides a love potion is his best hope to win over Adina. He uses his paltry savings to purchase a special potion from a very skillful traveling salesman named Dulcamara.

Nemorino is convinced the potion is magical and will make Adina fall in love with him. But, will the elixir help love find its way? Will the path to love be simple?

Directed by Kyle Lang, "The Elixir of Love" features sumptuous arias, beautiful musical melodies and scenes with rapid-fire comic pattern. Adam Turner, Virginia Opera's artistic director will conduct the Donizetti score. The opera features one of the more celebrated tenor arias, "Una furtiva lagrima." ("a furtive tear"). In the song Nemorino vividly recalls a tear on his beloved Adina's cheek; he convinces himself that she loves him.

The cast features Cecilia Violetta López named a rising star by "Opera News" as Adina. Recent



PHOTO BY BEN SCHILL PHOTOGRAPHY

Cecilia Violetta Lopez as Adina and Carlos Enrique Santelli as Nemorino in Virginia Opera's "The Elixir of Love."

winner of the 2018 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, tenor Carlos Enrique Santelli makes his Virginia Opera mainstage debut appearing as lovelorn Nemorino. Bass-baritone Matthew Burns is Dulcamara the animated purveyor of the magical love potions. Corey Crider sings the role of the dashing military man Belcore.

In an interview, Burns, originally from Richmond and a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University, discussed his character of Dulcamara as not unlike a traveling salesman selling "the virtues of a dark looking drink as a cure to fix anything." When singing rapid fire comic songs his character Dulcamara is like "a modern day rapper, able to rattle off lyrics and names in quick seconds."

"The Elixir of Love," is one of the most performed operas worldwide. Visit the Virginia Opera production to enjoy its happy endings.

Virginia Opera presents "The Elixir of Love" at the George Mason University, Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Performances: Saturday, Feb 16, 2019 at 8 p.m. and Sunday, Feb 17, 2019 at 2 p.m. Tickets: \$110, \$90, \$54. Call 888-945-2468, or visit www.cfa.gmu.edu. Note: Sung in Italian with English subtitles. A pre-performance discussion featuring "Dr. Opera," Glenn Winters begins 45 minutes prior to the performance.

event of the winter season. Space limited, register online (tinyurl.com/y9nz9q48) or call 703-451-9588 to save a spot. \$9. Email casey.riley@fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-451-9588 for more.

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.

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 for tickets.

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 or Angela Edgemon at Aedge619@aol.com, or call 703-339-6572 or visit 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.fairfaxstation.org, 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. Email mb.brooke@verizon.net for more.

SATURDAY/FEB. 16

"One Woman, One Vote." 10 a.m. at Sydenstricker United Methodist Church, 8508 Hooes Road, Springfield. All are welcome to the showing of the PBS video "One Woman, One Vote." The film documents the 70-year battle for women's suffrage in the United States, culminating in the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. The film, narrated by Susan Sarandon, is part of the general meeting of the Springfield-Annandale branch of the American Association of University Women. Contact Irene McGhee at 703-628-4048.

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.

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

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.

SUNDAY/FEB. 17

NTRAK Scale Model Train Show. 1-4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Northern Virginia NTRAK members will hold a N gauge Model Train Display at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum. Ages 16 and older, \$4; 5-15, \$2; 4 and under, free. Visit www.fairfaxstation.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, or call 703-425-9225.

TUESDAY/FEB. 19

Serve Up Dinner for the Animals. 4:30-5:30 p.m. at Hidden Pond Nature Center, 8511 Greeley Boulevard, Springfield. It may not be everyone's idea of dinner, but worms and insects are considered fine dining for the nature center's exhibit animals. Help a naturalist care for and feed the animals. Ages 3-adult. \$6 per person. Call 703-451-9588 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/hidden-pond for more.

SATURDAY/FEB. 23

Orienteering Workshop. 10 a.m.-noon at Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Put down the GPS and get around the old-fashioned way. Orienteering is the sport of navigation with map and compass. It's easy to learn but always presents challenges. Participants in this program will learn how to use a compass, read a topographic map and navigate orienteering courses. A compass is required. Designed for participants age 8-adult. \$31 per person. Call 703-323-6600 or visit fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/burke-lake.

Reception: Amazing Art Jam. 7-11 p.m. 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 for more.

NEWS

Promoting Early Learning

BY STEVE HIBBARD
THE CONNECTION

Diane Volcansek heads Northern Virginia Association for the Education of Young Children with 1,100 members.

Diane Volcansek, 47, of Herndon is the new Executive Director of the Northern Virginia Association for the Education of Young Children, which has 1,100 members and covers Fairfax, Arlington and Loudoun counties as well as the city of Fairfax and Alexandria. She also works as the Director of Christ Presbyterian Preschool, which has 110 students, along Route 50 near Fairfax/Chantilly.

Her new position is important, she says, because the early childhood education world is so varied. It includes in-home daycares where the employees have a high school diplomas all the way up to private schools where the teachers have upper-level graduate degrees, but they all affect the world of a young child.

"NVAEYC hopes to standardize the continuity of care and professional development for these educators. We also hope to be a voice for those who work in the early child education field as policy and local and state laws are developed," she said. Up until about a year ago, the organization was all-volunteer.

She said her mission is to promote high-quality early learning for every child from birth to age 8. "We connect practice, policy and research to support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young chil-



Diane Volcansek is the new Executive Director of Northern Virginia Association for the Education of Young Children.

PHOTO BY STEVE HIBBARD/
THE CONNECTION

dren in Northern Virginia," she said. They are an affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

"My job is to coordinate with the volunteer Board of Directors to make sure that we have an outreach program to those who serve young children in the Northern Virginia area — to meet and collaborate with local elected officials, School Board officials, early childhood education professionals — to help them grow and learn in early childhood concepts," she said.

She added: "We train early childhood professionals on best practices based on the latest research and we advocate at the local and state level for the policy to best benefit young children."

They provide professional development workshops to early childhood professionals in the area. "We offer training on different concepts teachers can take into their classroom — behavior management, math and science curriculum, mental health and other current topics," she said.

Part of her job is also community engagement. They conduct family events where they help educate parents to engage them in developmentally appropriate activities. They hold arts parties where they engage young children in creative art processes in libraries and other settings. They've also hosted book clubs and book stores with guest readers. The Week of the Young Child held in April is where they explore different

areas of child development and celebrate what young children are capable of doing.

They also help in the preschool accreditation process. The National Association for the Education of Young Children provides an accreditation system for early childhood programs and they help local schools reach that accreditation. Since 1985, the NAEYC accreditation has served as a transformative quality improvement system that sets professional standards for early learning programs and helps families identify programs of the highest quality, she said. The accreditation process can take two years and there's also a renewal process.

According to Rosemary Kendall, Ph.D., Co-President: "We are excited to have Diane Volcansek as our new executive director. She brings to the job enthusiasm, experience in a variety of early care and education settings, and an understanding of the importance of teamwork and involving new partners. NVAEYC currently provides professional development and scholarships to early childhood educators in Northern Virginia. We also advocate for local, state, and federal efforts to promote high-quality early learning for every child birth through age 8. Her leadership will help NVAEYC continue its work in all these areas."

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NEWS

GOP, Dems Clash Over Abortion Bill

BY KATHLEEN SHAW
AND DANIEL BERTI
CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

Virginia Republicans voiced outrage Thursday, Jan. 31, to a failed proposal by Democrats that would have expanded abortion rights — even moments before birth — as one GOP legislator shed tears and another called the proposal “extremely disturbing.”

“I didn’t quite arrive on time, but I lived. Had this legislation been in place, who knows how things could have turned out,” said Del. Emily Brewer, R-Suffolk.

Del. Kathy Tran, D-Fairfax, sponsored HB 2491, which would have eliminated certain requirements before undergoing an abortion, such as approval from three physicians and an ultrasound. At last Monday’s subcommittee hearing on the bill, a Republican lawmaker asked Tran whether the bill would allow for an abortion to occur when a woman is in labor and about to give birth; Tran said yes. The subcommittee voted 5-3 to table the measure.

On Thursday last week, Tran corrected herself. “I should have said: ‘Clearly, no because infanticide is not allowed in Virginia, and what would have happened in that moment would be a live birth.’”

Republicans seized on Tran’s initial comments — and Gov. Ralph Northam’s support for a woman’s right to choose an abortion — as evidence that the Democrats would allow infanticide.

In an unorthodox move on Monday last week, House Speaker Kirk Cox, a Republican from Colonial Heights, stepped down from the House chamber dais to speak in opposition to Tran’s legislation. Cox, who has advocated anti-abortion legislation since 1990, said 61,012,997 abortions have been performed since 1973.

“It was extremely disturbing that essentially you have legislation that does not protect the unborn at all, that you can have an abortion up to the point of birth. And I guess what truly disturbed me was that the other side almost seems to be celebrating that position,” Cox said.

Originally, 23 Democrats co-sponsored Tran’s bill, but some, including Del. Dawn Adams of Richmond, said they would pull their support. The controversy has made national headlines and drawn widespread condemnation from Republicans. President Donald Trump criticized Northam for speaking in favor of Tran’s bill.

Northam and Democratic legislators held a press conference of their own Thursday last week to respond to the Republicans and to reiterate support for abortion rights.

“We believe legislators, most of whom are men, should not be making decisions about women’s

choices for their reproductive health,” Northam said. “We can agree to disagree on this topic, but we can be civil about it.”

Northam said some Republicans were attempting to use the issue to score political points.

Attorney General Mark Herring, who also spoke at the press conference, called Republican efforts to discredit Democrats “desperate” and “ugly.”

“Their political games have exposed a member of the House of Delegates to violent personal threats,” Herring said. “And now, Kirk Cox has taken his caucus completely off the deep end accusing Gov. Northam of supporting infanticide.”

The House minority leader, Del. Eileen Filler-Corn of Fairfax, said Virginia women wouldn’t be intimidated by House Republicans’ scare tactics.

“House Republicans have used their majority to try to shame women — to try to bully and dictate to women what we can and cannot do with our bodies,” Filler-Corn said. “Virginia women are watching, and Virginia women are paying attention.”

Abortion rights groups such as the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws and Progress Virginia continue to support Tran. Anna Scholl, executive director of Progress Virginia, said that Tran was a champion for women and that Republican legislators are taking her remarks out of context.

“We trust women to make decisions about their health care needs. Shame on politicians like Todd Gilbert and Kirk Cox for trying to distract us from the real issue here: getting politics out of the doctor’s office,” Scholl said.

Gilbert, a Republican from Shenandoah County, is the House majority leader. At the Republicans’ press conference, he equated abortion to murder. Gilbert said Democrats would allow late-term abortions out of concern not just for a woman’s physical health but also for her mental health.

“It has nothing to do with saving a woman’s life. A mental health concern could include anything that you can name that has an identifiable mental health issue — depression, anxiety, feelings that one gets when one is about to have to care for a child,” Gilbert said.

Brewer co-chairs the Foster Care Caucus and is an outspoken advocate for improving Virginia’s adoption and foster care systems. She received a tissue and support from Del. Kathy Byron, R-Bedford, while tearing up at the news conference. Brewer said her birth-mother could have chosen to abort her but instead saved her life and fulfilled the life of her adoptive parents.

“61,012,997. How many of those were delegates that never had a chance to serve? How many of those were precious children who would’ve made an adoptive parent like mine — a first-time mom or dad?” Brewer said.

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Find homeless and cold weather drop-in centers and shelters that serve Northern Virginia at www.novaregion.org/174/Homeless-Shelter-Lists.

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

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

Museum is also seeking an individual to coordinate the scheduling of the volunteer staff. Training will be provided for all positions. Email volunteers@fairfax-station.org or call 703-945-7483 for opportunities. The Museum is located at 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station. It is open every Sunday, except holidays, from 1-4 p.m. Visit www.fairfax-station.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, or call 703-425-9225.

The Shepherd’s Center of Fairfax-Burke needs volunteer drivers for

trips to medical appointments (Monday - Friday) and companion shopping (Tuesday, Friday) within the Fairfax-Burke area and in the South County area (west of Route 1, Alexandria). Office volunteers are also needed to work in the SCFB (Olley Glen) office to schedule rides. Bilingual volunteers (English and Spanish) are needed as drivers and office volunteers. Email Shavaun Wall at

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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 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.

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

THURSDAY/FEB. 7

Public Hearing on E-Bikes on Park Trails. 7 p.m. at The Jean R. Packard Center at Occoquan Regional Park, 9751 Ox Road, Lorton. A public hearing will be held on proposed changes to regulations on the use of Electrically Assisted Bicycles, or e-bikes, in Fairfax County and NOVA Parks. Under the proposal, the regulation would define an e-bike and clarify distinctions between e-bikes and mopeds. Draft guidelines for the use of e-bikes within Fairfax and NOVA Parks will be presented. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/e-bikes for more.

FRIDAY/FEB. 8

“Why Won’t My Child Go to School?” 10 a.m.-noon at Dunn Loring Center for Parent Services, 2334 Gallows Road, Entrance 1 – Room 100, Dunn Loring. Dr. Lisa Batemen, of Neurosciences, Inc., presents this workshop sharing information on school refusal. Highlights include symptoms of school refusal, including behavioral symptoms, and patterns of behavior. Batemen will also share information on the differences between school refusal and truancy, causes of school refusal, strategies for parents and resources to help support students. Call 703-204-3941 or visit www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center for more or to register.

SATURDAY/FEB. 9

Fairfax County NAACP Meeting. 10 a.m.-noon at West Springfield Government Center, 6140 Rolling Road, West Springfield. Join Fairfax County NAACP for their monthly meeting to review and discuss their 2019 Advocacy Agenda. The Youth Council will also host a food drive for the Capital Area Food Bank. Light refreshments will be served. RSVP at www.eventbrite.com/e/2019-agenda-presentation-and-meeting-tickets-55144018243. Visit www.fairfaxnaacp.org/ for more.

Hannah P. Clark Open House. Noon-3 p.m. at the historic Hannah P. Clark (Enyedi) property located at 10605 Furnace Road, Lorton. The Resident Curator Program provides the opportunity for individuals, non-profit and for-profit organizations to secure long-term lease agreements in beautiful public park settings such as Hannah P. Clark (Enyedi) in Fairfax County. The curator leases are without charge in exchange for a financial commitment towards approved rehabilitation of the Park Authority’s underutilized historic properties. Visit online www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resident-curator-program or contact Stephanie Langton at 703-324-8791.

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My Own Sort of Groundhog Day



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As it happens every year around this time, the monthly calendar turns to February, and I am reminded of the goings on in my life Jan. 1 through Feb. 27, 2009.

I was not, as yet, in the throws of having been diagnosed with non-small cell lung cancer, stage IV, but I was in pursuit of finding the cause of the shortness of breath and stinging pain in my side that first manifested on Jan. 1, 2009.

Cancer was the last word I expected to hear in late February after a biopsy confirmed the finding. Until I received that call from my primary care physician on Thursday, Feb. 20, advising me that the tissue biopsy was indeed malignant, I had been, since that New Year’s Day visit to the Emergency Room, in a diagnostic dalliance to determine what had caused an otherwise, healthy 54-and-half-year-old man, to present with such symptoms.

The Emergency Room doctor was perplexed as the chest X-Ray I had taken that day was inconclusive. In addition, I offered no pertinent medical history to account for the symptoms I was experiencing.

Eventually I was released and it was suggested that I return in a week, have another chest X-Ray then and see a pulmonary doctor. And so I did. After reviewing both X-Rays, and examining me, the pulmonologist was equally perplexed. I was healthy by all appearances and I had no family history of anything.

Out of curiosity – or bewilderment – the doctor told me to get a CT scan, which I did, approximately two weeks later, at the earliest available time. Within a day of having been CT-scanned, I was called by the pulmonologist and advised to schedule an appointment with a thoracic surgeon, a specialty with which I was totally unfamiliar.

Two weeks or so later, at the first available time, I saw the surgeon. Equally befuddled, by his own admission, after reviewing my two X-Rays and recent CT scan, he equivocated on the next step: ordering a P.E.T. scan, which he did not – until a few days later when he changed his mind and told me to make the arrangements; which of course I did, and again, it was approximately two weeks later that an appointment was available.

After receiving the results, the thoracic surgeon called me. He said, among other things: “Your scan lit up like a Christmas tree.”

Not good as I later learned.

And so, a surgical biopsy was scheduled, upon availability, about two weeks later, which presumably would determine the cause of my original discomfort and confirm what all this diagnostic back and forth had been about.

Within a few days of my procedure, I received a phone call at work from my internal medicine doctor. He asked if I wanted to come to his office to discuss the results. I said “No, just tell me,” figuring that a request to see him in his office meant bad news.

Sure enough, it was.

He told me that the sample was malignant. Stunned by the news, I remember asking: “What does that mean?” He might have mentioned cancer, I can’t recall. He instead deferred and referred me to an oncologist, actually making the appointment for me for the following Thursday, only a week later.

Nearly two months had passed since the original Jan. 1 visit to the E.R.

Finally on Feb. 27, I was going to find out what’s been going on – from an oncologist. And sure enough, on that following Thursday, my new-best-friend-to-be, lowered the boom: “Lung cancer.”

My prognosis he said: “13 months to two years.” Moreover, he advised: He “could treat me,” but he “couldn’t cure me.” In simple terms, he told me I was “terminal.”

Not that I don’t already think about having cancer every minute of every day but especially so at this time of the year. This is when my world, as I knew it, came crashing down. Over and over, I review the days and weeks leading up to that first appointment with my oncologist and the impact the diagnosis has had on my life.

Granted, it’s nothing to laugh about, but given that I’ve survived so long, it’s certainly something to be grateful about.

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



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