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College student Brayan Brito came to America for a better life.

WELLBEING
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Chantilly CONNECTION

Fair Oaks ♦ Fair Lakes

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PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

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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."

2 ❖ CHANTILLY CONNECTION ❖ FEBRUARY 6-12, 2019

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

‘I Didn’t Think about Danger, Just Escape’

One immigrant’s perilous road to a better life.

BY BONNIE HOBBS

Today, Brayan Brito is a typical college student, busy with classes and exams, and with a bright future ahead of him. But his life wasn’t always so rosy.

He had a tough upbringing in his native Guatemala and hit rock bottom before deciding to come to the U.S. But that decision has made all the difference for him.

Raised by a single mom, Brito had three half-brothers and one younger brother. And his last two years there, ages 15 and 16, were particularly depressing.

“People hated me for being my father’s son because he had another family first, with seven children,” said Brito. “So I got bullied. Before I was born, he was in prison for eight years. And when he got out, he only took care of his first family. Then he went to the U.S. and came back when I was 16.”

“I cried when I saw him because I thought things would be amazing,” continued Brito. “But when I’d tell him my dreams, he’d say I’d never be better than him, and it made me feel so bad.” Meanwhile, the bullying continued, and someone threw a Molotov cocktail at his home.

By then, he considered killing himself and set fire to a pile of clothes in his bedroom, thinking he’d die of smoke inhalation while he slept. “But I woke up later with people around my bed,” he said. “My mom had seen the smoke and called family members and neighbors to come.”

“That’s when I knew I’d lost my sense of life and had to do something to make a change,” said Brito. “So I decided to go to the U.S. I only had a half hour before I had to leave, and I couldn’t even say goodbye



Brayan Brito: “I had to do something to make a change.”

to my little brother — and I love him. But I said goodbye to my mom, and she understood it was the best thing for me.”

Brito knew someone else who’d planned to leave the country, but couldn’t make it, so he took his place. His older brother Alex, 18,

took him to a larger city to meet with a man who’d take Brayan and others to the Guatemalan/Mexican border

He’d had some money, clothes, good shoes and his cell phone with him. Then, while still in Guatemala, he left his backpack in a stranger’s car along the way and lost everything. “But Alex gave me the money he’d saved for college and his favorite, strong shoes, in exchange for the poor ones I was wearing,” said Brito. “Then Alex returned home and eventually attended and finished college.”

It took about 45 days to get to the border, traveling by taxis, cars, buses and on foot. “At one point, I stayed in a house in Mexico with 19 people,” said Brito. “Then it took about a month to reach Texas.”

It was 2014, and he was coming to Centreville to live with his half-brother who’d already been here 10 years. “It took a long time to get here because I kept getting separated from my traveling group,” said Brito. “I got lost, and a wonderful, American family in Texas helped me. I re-joined the group, then got lost again in the desert, but found the group again.”

After two more days, around 2 a.m., they were surrounded by immigration agents. “We just gave up,” said Brito. “But I didn’t want to go back to Guatemala, so I slid down a hill of sand and ran from tree to



Brayan Brito’s June 2018 graduation from Mountain View: Friends Alice and Jerry Foltz with grad Brayan Brito and his brother, Diego Chavez Brito.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS

tree until I got out of the area. One of the agents got close and asked me in Spanish, ‘Are you sure you want to do this? Do you have enough water?’ But I didn’t think about the danger — I just wanted to escape.”

Once he did, he fell asleep in some tall grass. “When I woke up, there was just sand and emptiness everywhere,” said Brito. “I only had one bottle of water, a can of juice and some almonds for three-and-a-half days, alone in the desert.”

He walked in the direction his group had been traveling before. “I was afraid immigration would find me; so in open areas, I’d run, instead of saving energy,” he said. “I conserved water, too, and only drank a few drops at a time — and it tasted delicious.”

At night, Brito heard animals, including coyotes, all around him. But he said he felt at peace and wasn’t afraid of them. Eventually, he saw a tiny light, far in the distance, so he walked toward it. It took one-and-a-half hours to get there and it was a military base, but he walked past it and ended up on a deserted highway, walking almost five more hours before he was picked

up by immigration.

He was arrested and placed in a camp with other minors for 28 days. But unlike in similar camps today, Brito said he and the others were treated well, fed and given school classes. “It was a good place and less dangerous than home was,” he said. “I had a court hearing, and they eventually released me to my brother.”

After a couple weeks, though, he became homeless. Yet once he started school at Mountain View High, things started looking up for him. Although — like everything else in his young life then — it wasn’t easy.

“I rented a couch in someone’s house for \$150/month,” said Brito. “I worked as a busboy in a Korean restaurant, six days a week, 12 hours a day. I attended school from 8 a.m.-2:50 p.m. and had just 10 minutes to get to the restaurant by 3 p.m. I worked until 3 a.m. and was very tired. I walked back and forth from where I lived and only got three or four hours of sleep.”

Luckily, he said, Mountain View doesn’t give homework, so he did all his schoolwork in class. “I was in survival mode, but was

SEE A BETTER LIFE. PAGE 7

ROUNDUPS

Collect Food For WFCM

Residents, businesses and organizations can help restock Western Fairfax Christian Ministries’ (WFCM) food pantry with non-perishable items during an upcoming Stuff the Bus event. It will be held this Saturday, Feb. 9, from 9 a.m.-4 p.m., in front of the Giant grocery store in the Colonnade at Union Mill Shopping Center.

CAC Topic: Domestic Violence

Domestic violence will be the topic of the next meeting of the Sully District Police Station’s Citizens Advisory Committee. It’s set for Wednesday, Feb. 13, at 7:30 p.m.

Angela Acosta, an outreach specialist with

the Office for Women & Domestic and Sexual Violence Services, will speak about how to identify the various types of domestic violence. Also presented will be bystander information on how abuse affects victims and the programs/resources available to help. In addition, Det. Jacqui Smith, the domestic-violence detective for the Sully District, will discuss the law pertaining to domestic violence, give recent updates and explain the process from the law-enforcement side.

Free Carseat Inspections

Certified technicians from the Sully District Police Station will perform free, child safety carseat inspections Tuesday, Feb. 19, from 5-8:30 p.m., at the station, 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. No appoint-

ment is necessary. But residents should install the child safety seats themselves so technicians may properly inspect and adjust them, as needed.

Because of time constraints, only the first 35 vehicles arriving on each date will be inspected. That way, inspectors may have enough time to properly instruct the caregiver on the correct use of the child seat. Call 703-814-7000, ext. 5140, to confirm dates and times.

Free Training Classes for CERT

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program educates residents about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area. CERT trains county residents in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue,

team organization, and disaster medical operations. Using the training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help. Emphasis on hands-on skill development and Fairfax County protocols and procedures.

This training does not require any special physical strength or agility. For more information and to register for the next class at the Fire and Rescue Academy, visit <https://volunteer.fairfaxcounty.gov/recruiter/index.php?recruiterID=1380&class=OppDetails&oppGuid=%7b5710DACC-7CF8-4696-ABFF-8C00A598EC40%7d&t=0-Interested-In-CERT-or-a-CERT-Member>

CERT training will be held at the Fire and Rescue Academy, Monday and Wednesday, Feb. 25, 27, March 4, 6, 11, 13, 18, 20.

OPINION

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.

EDITORIAL 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.

Do you volunteer at an animal shelter or therapeutic riding center or take your pet to visit people in a nursing home? Does your business have a managing pet? Is your business about pets? Have you helped to train an assistance dog? Do you or someone in your family depend on an assistance dog?

Or take this opportunity to memorialize a beloved pet you have lost.

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

Please tell us a little bit about your creature, identify everyone in the photo, give a brief description what is happening in the photo, and include address and phone number (we will not publish your address or phone number, just your town name).

Email to smauren@connectionnewspapers.com or submit online at www.connectionnewspapers.com/pets.

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— MARY KIMM

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Strongest Voice

To the Editor:

Dr. Ibraheem Samirah brings energy, enthusiasm, and ideas to the 86th District. He is the Democratic candidate, and he is sprinting into the special election in less than a month, Feb. 19. He is running for the seat left vacant when voters chose Jennifer Boysko to move into the Senate.

Dr. Samirah offers to voters his experience as a dentist and founder of a small business. He runs a community-based clinic that serves its DC neighborhood. He knows the importance of health care, and also the need for good management.

Driving daily from Herndon to his office, Dr. Samirah knows the hazards of commuting, including delays, traffic, and high tolls. "The tolls need to come down" to help northern Virginia commuters, he says. Northern Virginia is the eco-

nomic engine of the state, and residents here shouldn't be punished for our growth and strong economy.

Dr. Samirah will also work to expand the insurance marketplace. "Virginia can strengthen insurance options, even if the federal government is unable to act," he said. He knows first-hand the importance of affordable health care for all.

Dr. Samirah is also concerned about public education, and wants to work for higher teacher pay, lower class sizes, and pre-K education across the state. He says that Virginia's base of support for local schools has declined, and needs to return to levels that make us competitive with other states.

Because he supports growing health insurance options, more funding for public schools, and lowering tolls, Dr. Samirah is the strongest voice for all in the 86th District. Vote Samirah on Feb. 19.

Alice Foltz
Centreville

Importance Of Education

To the Editor:

Education is a basic and critical necessity which should be available to everyone. In order to be successful and happy, one needs to be educated so as to pursue a fulfilling career. It is an undeniable fact that education is more important for children because they are the future of the world and are the key to developing a thriving country and world.

Children are the foundation for building the nation with their knowledge. But to have this knowledge, kids need good teachers; and for teachers to be great educators, they need the right resources and be respected for their work. This is sadly not happening. Many teachers from Los Angeles to Denver have gone on strike because they are not being

paid enough for their hard work. Their class sizes are too large for them to handle and they aren't able to give enough quality attention to each student. As an American Muslim and a college student, this is greatly disappointing to me. Islam teaches that education is a requirement of my faith, and therefore, my teachers are to be respected. Prophet Muhammad said that seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim man and woman. The Holy Qur'an also exhorts the followers to pray to God to increase our knowledge (20:115).

Teaching children is not easy. If they don't get the right resources I worry that the next generation won't be able to shape their own future. Will our country realize the importance of education and invest in our teachers before it's too late?

Sabiha Basit
Centreville

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

BULLETIN BOARD

WINTER SHELTERS

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

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

Children who will be 5 years old on or before Sept. 30, 2019, are eligible to attend kindergarten. Find the correct neighborhood school by entering your address at boundary.fcps.edu/boundary/. Complete a packet of registration forms found at www.fcps.edu/it/forms/enroll.pdf or in the school office. Gather supporting documents: proof of residence in the school boundary, a certified copy of the child's birth certificate, parent/guardian photo ID, and any custody orders. Certificate of physical exam and immunization will be required before the student may start school, but is not required for registration. Parents who choose to delay enrollment in kindergarten by one year are required to notify the school in writing of their intent.

Learn more at www.fcps.edu/registration/general-registration-requirements.

❖ **Colin Powell Elementary School** in Centreville will conduct their Kindergarten registration on Friday, April 5, 9 a.m.-noon; parents may also call 571-522-6008 to schedule an appointment. Due to the time required to register a child, they request that only parents come to school for registration.

Greenbriar West Elementary School is now accepting information for next year's Kindergarten classes. Families within the school's boundaries should call the school office at 703-633-6700 as soon as possible.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Interested in local Civil War or Railroad History? Consider volunteering at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum. The Museum offers a variety of volunteer opportunities in Museum events, programs and administration. The Museum is also seeking an individual to coordinate the scheduling of the

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

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)

Chantilly CONNECTION

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A Connection Newspaper

Bargeron Honored as Officer of the Month

By Bonnie Hobbs

PFC Zachary Bargeron was recently selected as an Officer of the Month for the Sully District Police Station. And as such, he was honored at a meeting of the station's Citizens Advisory Committee.



PFC Zachary Bargeron

Police 2nd Lt. Nicholas DiPippa nominated him for Officer of the Month, explaining why Bargeron is deserving of this award.

Noting that Fairfax County police officers

stop many motorists for a variety of reasons – mainly minor traffic infractions – DiPippa wrote, “The outcome of most traffic stops is a warning or a traffic citation. After conducting several hundred traffic stops and many roadside interviews, officers become more in tune with behaviors that lend to question whether additional investigation is necessary.”

Accordingly, he wrote, “PFC Bargeron – who has been a member of the Fairfax County Police Department since 2015 and is assigned to the midnight shift – has shown a great propensity to disrupt criminal behavior in our community through traffic enforcement. His approach has proven to be effective. One example was recently noted:

“Bargeron observed a vehicle on a major thoroughfare in the Sully District in operation with defective equipment. He stopped the vehicle and, while speaking with the driver, recognized two passengers from past encounters – one of which was a suspect known to carry weapons. Bargeron separated the driver from the passengers and, through conversation, determined the passengers were involved in the possession and distribution of illegal narcotics.”

DiPippa stated that Bargeron directed the passengers to exit the vehicle. The officer then observed “additional indications of narcotics,” wrote DiPippa. “Numerous pills, individually packaged material, drug paraphernalia and proceeds from narcotics distribution

were collected from the suspects and from the vehicle.

The suspects must have realized their arrest was imminent, as they declined an opportunity for further conversation with Bargeron.”

“With the ever-present opioid crisis, the traffic stop initiated by PFC Bargeron – and his willingness to look beyond the defective equipment violation – may have saved a life or stopped a drug overdose,” continued DiPippa.

“The investigative efforts removed two dangerous individuals from the community and are worthy of recognition. As such, PFC Bargeron has been selected as Officer of the Month.”

Information Sought in Road Rage Incident

The Sully Police District is asking for the public's help in its investigation a road rage incident that occurred Thursday, Jan. 31 on northbound Route 28 between Lee Highway and Ellanor C. Lawrence Park. Around 11:08 a.m., a traffic altercation occurred on Route 28 between a white Kia Forte and a white Toyota Rav4 ending in a confrontation in the parking lot of Ellanor C. Lawrence Park. During

the confrontation, one man fired a gun twice towards another man. No one was injured during the incident.

Anyone who may have witnessed the traffic altercation or any of the subsequent events that occurred at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park are asked to call Detective J.P. Farrell at the Sully District Station at 703-814-7026.

Tips can be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by

visiting <http://www.fairfaxcrimesolvers.org>, or calling 1-866-411-TIPS. They can also be sent in via text by texting “TIP187” plus the message to CRIMES (274637).

Text STOP to 274637 to cancel, or HELP to 274637 for help. Message and data rates may apply. Anonymous tipsters are eligible for cash rewards of \$100 to \$1000 if their information leads to an arrest.

[http://](http://www.fairfaxcrimesolvers.org)

The following incidents were reported by the Sully District Police Station.

ROBBERY: 5501 Union Mill Road (Shell station), Feb. 1, 1:50 p.m. Two men entered the Shell station armed with a knife and announced a robbery. The men took cash from the clerk and ran away. There were no injuries to the victim.

FEB. 4 LARCENIES
4300 block of Chantilly Shopping Center, merchandise from business
4200 block of Galesbury Lane, merchandise

and credit cards from residence 5200 block of Rachael Alice Lane, property from location
5100 block of Westfields Boulevard, merchandise from business

FEB. 1 LARCENIES
11900 block of Market Street, merchandise from business

JAN. 31 LARCENIES
6400 block of Brass Button Court, items from vehicle

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plying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
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for a Beer On Premises license to sell or
manufacture alcoholic beverages. Lauren
Posey-Rodriguez, Member. NOTE: Objec-
tions to the issuance of this license must
be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days
from the publishing date of the first of
two required newspaper legal notices.
Objections should be registered at
www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200

Legals

ABC LICENSE

Total Beverage G. B. Inc. trading as Total
Wine and More, 13053 Lee Jackson Me-
morial Hwy Ste B, Fairfax, VA 22033-2046.
The above establishment is applying to the
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC
BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) for a Wine and
Beer Off Premises/Keg Permit/Delivery Permit
license to sell or manufacture alcoholic bev-
erages. Thomas H. Haubenstricker, Director/
Secretary/Treasurer. NOTE: Objections to the
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ENTERTAINMENT

Submit entertainment announcements
at [www.connectionnewspapers.com/Cal-
endar/](http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/). The deadline is noon on Friday.
Photos/artwork encouraged.

FRIDAY-SUNDAY/FEB. 8-10

Westfield Theatre presents RENT.

Friday-Saturday, 7 p.m.; Sunday, 2
p.m. at Westfield High School, 4700
Stonecroft Blvd., Chantilly. RENT
brings the atmosphere of the AIDS
epidemic center stage. The students
of Westfield Theatre portray mature
themes and accurately present the
era as it was, a time ravaged by
anxiety and uncertainty. But in the
face of fear, this group makes the
most of life with whatever they've
got. Be it two drumsticks and a
bucket or a long table at a restaurant,
they're always living "la vie boheme."
There will be a silent auction at each
show benefiting AIDS United.
Reserved tickets are \$10 online or
\$12 at the door. Visit
www.westfieldtheatre.com/rent.

SATURDAY/FEB. 9

Dancing into the Chinese New

Year. 10:30-11:30 a.m. at The
Centreville Regional Library, 14200
St. Germain Drive, Centreville.
Xuejan Dance Ensemble specializes in
classical Chinese dance, as well as
Chinese folk and ethnic dance. Learn
about the Chinese New Year, while
enjoying Chinese dance. All ages.
Call 703-830-2223 or email
libCE@fairfaxcounty.gov.

SUNDAY/FEB. 10

T-TRAK Scale Model Train Show.

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

Live Music: Laurie Lewis & the

Right Hands. 7 p.m. (doors open at
6) at Frying Pan Farm Park Visitor
Center, 2739 West Ox Road,
Herndon. Make plans to "hitch up the
team" and head to Frying Pan Farm
Park this season for Bluegrass Barn.
Food and beverages available for
purchase. \$18 in advance, \$20 at the
door. Purchase tickets online at
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/frying-
pan-park/bluegrass-barn](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/frying-
pan-park/bluegrass-barn) or by phone
at 703-222-4664 or 703-437-9101.

MONDAY/FEB. 11

Little Hands Work on the Farm at

Frying Pan. 9:45 a.m. (2-3 year
olds); 11 a.m. (3-5 year olds) at
Frying Pan Farm Park, 2739 West Ox
Road, Herndon. Discover what
happens on a farm during the winter.
Children will learn about animals,
farm chores and how farm life
changes with the season with
activities such as stories, crafts or
games. \$8 per child. Children must
be accompanied by an adult. Call
703-437-9101 or visit
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/frying-
pan-park](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/frying-
pan-park).

MONDAYS/FEB. 11 & 25

African American Family History

Research. 7-8:30 p.m. at The
Centreville Regional Library, 14200
St. Germain Drive, Centreville.
African-American genealogy research
can be challenging. In this two-part
class, learn strategies, resources, and
tools to build a family tree. Adults.
Call 703-830-2223 or email
libCE@fairfaxcounty.gov.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 13

Pop-up Valentine. 7-8 p.m. at The

**Capital Remodel
+ Garden Show**

HGTV's "Fixer Upper" star Clint
Harp to headlines the Capital Re-
model + Garden Show. This show
will feature four large gardens show-
casing garden design, landscaping,
patios, water feature and furniture.
Additionally, more than 300 compa-
nies will exhibit the latest products
and services in home remodeling,
renovation, home décor, landscape
and garden design. Friday-Saturday,
Feb. 22-23, 10 a.m.-9 p.m.; Sunday,
Feb. 24, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. at Dulles
Expo Center, 4320 Chantilly Shop-
ping Center, Chantilly. Federal
workforce employee with govern-
ment ID will receive free admission
throughout the show. Single tickets
valid for one day of show: adults,
\$12 at box office (\$9 online); chil-
dren 6-12, \$3; 5 and younger, free.
Visit capitalremodelandgarden.com.



**HGTV's "Fixer Upper"
star Clint Harp to head-
lines the Capital Remodel
+ Garden Show.**

Centreville Regional Library, 14200
St. Germain Drive, Centreville. Enjoy
a Valentine story and make a pop-up
Valentine for that special someone.
Grades 1-6. Call 703-830-2223 or
email libCE@fairfaxcounty.gov.

THURSDAY/FEB. 14

Make Art Inspired by History. 10

a.m. or 5:30 p.m. at Ellanor C.
Lawrence Park, 5040 Walney Road,
Chantilly. This Valentine's Day,
gather friends and family together at
the park to create art inspired by
history. The artwork created will
reflect the season or month, and the
projects are designed for artists age
6-adult. The park will be offering
two, one-hour sessions. \$8 per
person. Call 703-631-0013 or visit
fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/eclawrence.

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.fairfax-
station.org](http://www.fairfax-
station.org) or call 703-425-9225.

TUESDAY/FEB. 19

Knit 2Gether. 7-8 p.m. at The

Centreville Regional Library, 14200
St. Germain Drive, Centreville. Learn
the basics of knitting or share
expertise. Needles provided along
with some yarn. Smooth worsted
weight yarn is recommended for
beginners. Featured project: mug
cozy. Teens to adult. Call 703-830-
2223 or email
libCE@fairfaxcounty.gov.

SATURDAY/FEB. 23

Choral Cabaret. 6:30-10 p.m. at

Centreville High School Cafe, 6001
Union Mill Road, Clifton. The Choral
Cabaret is a highlight of the calendar
and the biggest fundraiser for the
Centreville High School Choral
Boosters. The night is packed with
student performances, silent auction
items, desserts served by chorus-
member waiters, raffles, and more.
\$10. Visit [www.facebook.com/Cvhs-
Choral-Boosters-890773407795787/](http://www.facebook.com/Cvhs-
Choral-Boosters-890773407795787/).

SUNDAY/FEB. 24

Fire Building and S'mores. 4:30-

5:30 p.m. at Ellanor C. Lawrence
Park, 5040 Walney Road, Chantilly.

Learn the science and art of fire
building at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park.
Discover what it takes to build a fire,
and then test new abilities with
primitive fire bows and modern fire-
making techniques and then roast
s'mores. \$8 per person, and children
must be accompanied by a registered
adult. Call 703-631-0013 or visit
fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/eclawrence.

Live Music: Nothin' Fancy. 7 p.m.

(doors open at 6) at Frying Pan Farm
Park Visitor Center, 2739 West Ox
Road, Herndon. Make plans to "hitch
up the team" and head to Frying Pan
Farm Park this season for Bluegrass
Barn. Food and beverages available
for purchase. \$18 in advance, \$20 at
the door. Purchase tickets online at
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/frying-
pan-park/bluegrass-barn](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/frying-
pan-park/bluegrass-barn) or by phone
at 703-222-4664 or 703-437-9101.

The Capitol Steps Benefit

Performance. 7 p.m. at Fairfax
High School, 3501 Rebel Run Road,
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satire comedy troupe performs a
show to benefit high school theatre
for the Cappies of the National
Capitol Area. Free parking. Adults,
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children 12 and under, \$10; and
groups of 10 or more, \$15. Contact
Amy.Young@cappies.com or visit
www.cappies.com/nca.

MONDAY/FEB. 25

Little Hands Work on the Farm at

Frying Pan. 9:45 a.m. (2-3 year
olds); 11 a.m. (3-5 year olds) at
Frying Pan Farm Park, 2739 West Ox
Road, Herndon. Discover what
happens on a farm during the winter.
Children will learn about animals,
farm chores and how farm life
changes with the season with
activities such as stories, crafts or
games. \$8 per child. Children must
be accompanied by an adult. Call
703-437-9101 or visit
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/frying-
pan-park](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/frying-
pan-park).

SUNDAY/MARCH 24

Live Music: Valerie Smith &

Liberty Pike. 7 p.m. (doors open at
6) at Frying Pan Farm Park Visitor
Center, 2739 West Ox Road,
Herndon. Make plans to "hitch up the
team" and head to Frying Pan Farm
Park this season for Bluegrass Barn.
Food and beverages available for
purchase. \$18 in advance, \$20 at the
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pan-park/bluegrass-barn) or by phone
at 703-222-4664 or 703-437-9101.

A Better Life

FROM PAGE 3

inspired,” said Brito. “I fell in love with science when I saw documentaries about quantum mechanics, astronomy and famous scientists. And although I couldn’t understand it all, I began listening to their stories with a wireless earbud while I worked.”

But speaking English was another matter. “When I arrived I Centreville, I spoke no English,” said Brito. “After one-and-a-half years, I knew enough to comprehend things and interact in society. And after three years, I became fluent and it became my language.”

However, he said, “I was still full of hate because my family didn’t take care of me and I wanted to prove my father wrong. He told me I wouldn’t be anything, and I said, ‘Come find me in 10 years.’” And he credits Mountain View, its teachers and counselors with giving him the tools he needed for success. When Brito first went there, all he could say in English was, “Does anyone here speak Spanish?” Fortunately, his counselor, Tina Perez, and several other staff members did. They told him about this school of second chances guided by the motto, “Family, Love and Respect,” and said he could graduate in four years.

“I was happy,” he said. “They welcomed me and made me feel like home. Going there every morning was a feeling of having fun and being with friends. The teachers believed in me, and I focused on work and studying. All the teachers became my friends.”

Brito, a lawful permanent resident as a Green Card holder, began working at the Centreville Immigration Forum and became a volunteer director, using his talents to help others. And he participated in GMU’s Dream-Catchers program, which mentor students needing help overcoming their obstacles to getting an education.

He eventually became an excellent student who was honored with awards and several scholarships from Mountain View. In addition, he received the 10th Congressional District’s highly competitive Harry F. Byrd Jr. Leadership Scholarship and a check for \$10,000.

But that’s not all. One of the panel members who interviewed Brito for that scholarship was Shenandoah University President Tracy Fitzsimmons. And she was so impressed by his story that she offered him a Presidential Scholarship of \$20,000 a year for four years — a possible total of \$80,000.

He started there in August 2018, majoring in math and hoping to someday obtain a Ph.D. in mechanical engineering and, possibly, business. “I eventually want to own my own business,” said Brito. “I hope to combine the logic of math with mechanical engineering to design things, and with business to make a profit out of my own inventions.”

In his 30s, he said, he might join the Air Force and possibly do a project with NASA. In his 40s, said Brito, he might go into politics “to help people.” So what advice would he give to others struggling to succeed? “In anything you do, just start it,” he said. “Get into it as deep as you can, and everything else will fall into place.”

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-Thomas Fuller

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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.



PHOTOS BY WILL PALENSCAR

Westfield's Marshall Reed #3 gets his shot off and avoids a charging call.

Westfield's Taylor Morin dribbles the ball between Madison defenders Max Johnson #21 and Soren Almquist.

Warhawks Vanquish Bulldogs in 61-44 Win

The Madison Warhawks and Westfield Bulldogs battled it out on the hardwood in Chantilly on Feb. 2. The game was a rescheduled game that was postponed due to inclement weather on Jan. 30.

The home team Bulldogs started off with an early 7-4 lead after playing the first eight minutes.

Westfield's Tahj Summey scored 5 points,

including a 3 pointer and two from the charity stripe. AJ Arnolie led Madison with two early baskets.

In the 2nd quarter Madison scored 20 points and held the Bulldogs to 14 giving the Warhawks a 24-21 halftime advantage. AJ Arnolie paced the Warhawks with 6 points in the quarter while TJ Ulrich added 5, including a 3 pointer. Westfield was led by Marshall Reed's 7 points, and Sam

Johnson added Westfield's second three pointer of the game.

In the 3rd quarter Westfield was once again outscored by Madison, 22-13. Again, Westfield's Reed led Westfield with 8 of his teams 13 points, but six Madison players scored at least 2 points, including 8 points from Soren Almquist.

Down 46-34 starting the 4th quarter, Westfield did not pull any closer. Madison

outscored the Bulldogs 15-10 to take a 61-44 win. With the win Madison improved to 10-9. Westfield fell to 2-17. Madison was led by AJ Arnolie who scored 18. TJ Ulrich and Soren Almquist added 9 each. Westfield was led by Marshall reeds 17 points. Tahj Summey scored 8 and Sam Johnson and Trent Reimonenq added 7.

— WILL PALENSCAR

Bulldogs Defeat Chargers, 41-33

The Chantilly Chargers and Westfield Bulldogs laced them up for a Concorde District game at Westfield on Jan. 31. The two teams are separated by just under 5 miles.

Both teams started off to a low scoring first quarter with Chantilly edging Westfield 4-3 after 8 minutes of play.

In the 2nd quarter the Chargers would again outscore the Bulldogs, this time 11-8 giving the Chargers a 4-point advantage 15-11. Chantilly was led in the quarter by Chris Miers 5 points, while Westfield was led by Taylor Morin's 4 points.

In the 3rd quarter Westfield added 11 points, but Chantilly added 12 points giving the Chargers a 5-point halftime lead, 27-22. Chantilly was led by Joe Stupak and Luke Titus each of whom had 3 points in

the quarter. Westfield's Taylor Morin led the Bulldogs with 3 points.

In the 4th quarter Chantilly would pull ahead 29-22. Minutes later Westfield was within a point 29-28, and with 4:25 Westfield took the lead for good 30-29, while holding the Chargers to just 4 more points for the remainder of the game. Westfield outscored Chantilly 19-6, for the 41-33 win. Westfield's 4th quarter success was in large part getting to the foul line and converting where the Bulldogs went 8 of 9 for the quarter. Marshall Reed scored 5 points in the quarter while Sam Johnson also scored 5 points, including Westfield's only three pointer of the game. Westfield was led by Taylor Morin's 13 points and Sam Johnson added 11. Chantilly was led by Chris Miers and Avery Hinz with 8 points.

— WILL PALENSCAR



Chantilly's Derek Smith # 20 has a hand in the sightline of Westfield's Gavin Kiley #5 as he elevates for a shot.

Westfield's Marshall Reed powers his way to the basket with Chantilly's Avery Hines #32 and Luke Titus #5 defending.



PHOTOS BY WILL PALENSCAR