

Burke CONNECTION

Announcing the kick-off of the Blanket & Coat Drive for Syrian Refugees Chairman-elect Jeff McKay talks with Brody Buhler, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Sharon Bulova.

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'The Greatest Humanitarian Crisis in the World'

Kicking off Blanket & Coat Drive for Syrian Refugees 2019

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

I am pleased that Fairfax County has once again hosted this important humanitarian effort by partnering with local organizations and jurisdictions to help provide winter coats and warm blankets to Syrian refugees abroad...The Syrian Blanket Drive is special to me," said Sharon Bulova, Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Nov. 21, at the Fairfax County Government Center, to announce the start of the Blanket & Coat Drive for Syrian Refugees 2019.

According to Mark Gibb, President and Executive Director of NOVA Relief Center, the drive originated seven years ago when he and a small delegation of local leaders from Northern Virginia, among them Chairman Bulova, traveled to Turkey in part to encourage friendship and understanding with local governments. The American Turkish Friendship Association headquartered in Fairfax, formed to address the social and cultural needs of Turkish and American people living in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area arranged the trip. "(It) forever altered the lives of all those who went there that day," said Gibb. NOVA Relief Center is coordinating the Blanket & Coat Drive. This year's donations will be distributed to three camps in Jordan: Mafrak, Jerash and Irbid. According to the organization's website, since 2011, Syrians have been trying to escape the civil war at home, with a reported 6 million people displaced within Syria and another 5 million seeking haven as refugees, especially in the neighboring countries of Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan.

"I am always impressed with how generous, caring and compassionate our community is. Since we began this drive, Northern Virginia has sent more than 300,000 blankets and coats to Syrian refugees overseas. It is a great example of what happens when people of all faiths and backgrounds come together," said Bulova.

The Northern Virginia delegation went to a city in the southern part of Turkey called Adana, Gibb said. As part of the tour, the mayor and governor of the region asked if they would like to visit a Syrian refugee camp. "I'm not sure if any of us knew exactly what we were being invited to see," said Gibb. "The war in Syria was not a large news item here in the United States, and Syrian refugees were barely a blip on our radar screen. ... We discovered a fenced, tent city of more than 50,000 people, the majority of which, 60 percent, were children under the age of 12. To say they had nothing would be an understatement. We dis-



Kicking off the Blanket & Coat Drive for Syrian Refugees 2019: Brody Buhler, Oakton Stake President, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Abdun Nafey Matin, Assistant Regional Coordinator, Mid-Atlantic Region, Helping Hand for Relief and Development; Nausheen Baig, All Dulles Area Muslim Society; Rabia Baig, All Dulles Area Muslim Society; Martin Nohe, member of the Prince William County Board of Supervisors and member of the NOVA Relief Center Board of Directors; Asif Khan, Director of Public Affairs, Helping Hand for Relief and Development; Jeff McKay, Chairman-elect of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and current Lee District Supervisor; Mark Gibb, President and Executive Director of the Northern Virginia Relief Center; Sharon Bulova, Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and Mary Kathleen Paxton, Manager, Paxton Van Lines.

covered that these were normal, average, every day, people- police-men, firemen, teachers (who) through no fault of their own, had become refugees of this tragic war — no place to call home, no country to pay allegiance. They were all in need of the basic necessities - food, water, clothing. We were invited to go to one man's tent who had a family of four children. There was nothing in the tent except for some old ground covering rugs...As we talked to this man through a translator, we asked (him)... how we could help... He told us it was getting cold. Could we send him some blankets?" "That broke our hearts," said Bulova.

According to Gibb, given the gentleman's request, when the delegation returned home to the United States, they launched the first Northern Virginia Blanket Drive in coordination with other Northern Virginia jurisdictions, faith-based organizations and businesses. That first year they filled an entire 55-foot Paxton Companies moving van with blankets which they shipped overseas at no cost to the same refugee camp. "A few of us were fortunate enough to return to that camp and met the same man again who had requested the blankets. We told him we didn't bring just a few blankets we brought 50,000. This man wept, said we were from God as we delivered this precious cargo," said Gibb.

"So here we are today to continue our efforts to assist these somewhat forgotten people. It has been described as the great-



Mark Gibb, Executive Director of NOVA Relief Center, presents Mary Kathleen Paxton, Manager, Paxton Van Lines with a gift in recognition of the ongoing free shipping services the company provides to support the Blanket & Coat Drive for Syrian Refugees. Lee District Supervisor and Chairman-elect Jeff McKay and Sharon Bulova, Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, look on.

est humanitarian crisis in the world. A few years ago, we added coats as well as blankets, and over the six-year period, we have collected enough blankets and coats to fill over 12 full moving vans. The numbers of coats and blankets are staggering, but the needs are still more than our collective efforts...We cannot do this alone. We partner with a worldwide nonprofit group by the name of the 'Helping Hand for Relief and Development.' Without their assistance, we could not accomplish this task."

Gibb said he learned another significant need is education. "The children are not receiving any education as they are not allowed to attend the local school system as

the number of children would completely overwhelm the schools... We are asking this year, in addition to our Coat and Blanket Drive, that a small monetary donation be made to help with teachers, building structures and school supplies for these refugee children. We have added a donation button on our website, www.novareliefcenr.org, for this purpose. All donations will be used to help educate these refugee children."

"In this country, the holiday season is a time for giving. And there is nothing more meaningful than helping our brothers and sisters around the world find warmth and comfort during difficult times," said Bulova. She thanked the many individuals and organizations that are making this year's drive possible: "Mark Gibb and the NOVA Relief Center for organizing this drive every year; the faith communities and organizations in the private and public sectors for helping children and families as they seek safety from violence; elected officials across Northern Virginia who are using their offices as donation sites and finally, a special thank you to Bill Paxton and Paxton Van Lines of Springfield, Virginia for donating their time, manpower and equipment."

LEE DISTRICT SUPERVISOR and Chairman-elect Jeff McKay said he was happy to support and participate in the effort. "I've always held the belief that we, as a community, must help those most vulnerable whenever we have an opportunity. We must not forget all of those who face hardship, especially those who flee from persecution in other countries. In this time of divisiveness, it's important that we remember our humanity and come together to help our fellow man. Through the NOVA Relief Center's Blanket and Coat Drive for Syrian refugees, we can ensure that Syrian refugee camps will have supplies to stay warm this winter. It's a small, but necessary and important role we can all play," said Supervisor McKay.

Bulova's office and other sites such as those of elected officials, including several members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, serve as drop-off locations for gently used coats and blankets. Participants can stop by her office, Suite 530 of the Fairfax Government Center (5th floor), any time between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday with donations. "There is nothing more meaningful than helping our brothers and sisters around the world find warmth and comfort during difficult times," said Bulova.

The Blanket & Coat Drive for Syrian Refugees 2019 is currently underway and extended to Dec. 15, according to Mark Gibb. Visit, www.NOVAReliefCenter.org, for a complete list of drop-off locations and to donate to the education fund.

Getting Bills Ready for the 2020 State Legislature

BY SEN. SCOTT SUROVELL
(D-36)

The 2020 Virginia General Assembly will convene in about a month and legislators are now preparing bills to propose. Many constituents and advocacy groups are proposing legislation.

Two weeks ago, I reported on some of the bigger issues we are likely to tackle. In this column, I am covering a few of the bills that I will introduce. I will discuss more in future columns.

In the 2018 and 2019 sessions, we came very close to passing legislation prohibiting drivers from having a phone in their hand in a moving vehicle. In the last session, we approved legislation to prohibit this in construction zones, but the Speaker killed it by ruling Governor Ralph Northam's attempt to widen it to all highways not germane. It will pass this session.

I will propose several predatory lending reforms. Using Native American tribes as fronts, online lenders continue to make loans over the internet in Virginia at over 400 percent interest rates and requiring far off tribal arbitration for

disputes. Other states have enacted consumer protections, including steps to rein in interest rates, fees, collection practices and repeat loans.

I will introduce bills to curb firearm violence. The Unite the Right March in Charlottesville coupled with the four armed men who appeared at the Alexandria Farmer's Market in September underscore the need for local governments to have the ability to prohibit firearms at permitted public events. Second, suicide is the leading cause of firearm death in Virginia. One of my bills will allow people to place themselves on a "do-not-sell" list for firearms so they cannot be sold a gun if they have a moment of weakness. Third, Virginia's Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is still allowing permittees to license duck blinds in counties and areas where duck hunting is illegal under local ordinances. I will introduce legislation to fix this along with Del. Paul Krizek (D-44).

I will introduce a bill to create a new Public Defender's Office for Prince William County and the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park. Virginia currently has 25 public defender offices, but

Virginia's second-largest jurisdiction does not. A public defender's office will professionalize defense representation, improve justice outcomes and cost taxpayers little more than funding private court-appointed counsel.

In the late 1990s, Virginia required the use of alternative sentencing analyses to inform judges when convicted defendants should be considered for non-prison sentences. Over time, judges have ignored these recommendations more than followed them. I will carry legislation requiring the state to assemble data on judicial use of this data and require probation officers to provide findings about the costs of various sentencing alternatives to the courts before a judge renders a final sentence in a case. This would hopefully encourage more informed decision-making and better outcomes.

Virginia's civil justice system should also be modernized. Virginia and Mississippi are the only states in America that do not allow class action lawsuits. Virginia also still adheres to ancient doctrines that punish largely innocent collision victims, and we have not adjusted Virginia's auto insurance minimum policy limits since the

1970s when medical care cost a fraction of today's cost and the average car cost 25 percent of today's vehicles. This allows wrongdoers to escape responsibility and leaves innocent collision victims holding the bag for their own injuries.

Virginia's three boards governing mental health professionals issued regulations prohibiting therapies that attempt to change one's sexual orientation, known as "conversion therapy." We need to put that prohibition into law to ensure that it will not be reversed. I will introduce that bill.

For the last four sessions, I have introduced legislation to address the lack of available driving permits for many of my immigrant constituents.

Since 2014, Maryland and the District of Columbia have allowed driving permits to anyone who can show that they pay taxes, pass a driving test and pay fees. My bill has died in committee by one vote each year. I am hopeful the new majority will mean a better outcome.

Please email me at scott@scottsuovell.org if you have any questions or feedback

Will Democrats Deliver Real Change?

BY JOHN LOVAAS
RESTON IMPACT PRODUCER/HOST

On Nov. 5, the Democrats captured majorities in both houses of Virginia's General Assembly after a long period of Republicans' having their way with public policy in the Commonwealth. Now, let's see what the Dems do. Because Gov. Ralph Northam is also a Democrat and because the composition of the Party now is very different—both more diverse and more progressive—from the Democrats of old it seems reasonable to expect a major shift in a more progressive direction. In fact, there is a lot of talk among the new legislators about many overdue actions including addressing gaping income inequality, gun violence, basic health care, expansion of pre-school education, gerrymandering and voting rights—in addition to actually ratifying the E.R.A!

Some specific measures are being discussed, but we are starting to hear voices of some long-time incumbents counselling us not to expect too much too soon. Be realistic! We might expect bills introduced to raise the hopelessly outdated \$7.25 minimum wage with gradual increases actually

passing. But, there have also been reports that repeal of Virginia's so-called "right to work" law is unlikely even to be submitted and certainly will not pass if it were to surface. Corporations and their chambers of commerce still hold sway with too many legislators including a junior local state senator and other longer serving members. Many of us believe that the "right to work" law which stifles creation of unions is a major factor in income inequality, severely tilting the playing field against working men and women. Sadly, it appears that the new majorities may lack the spine to remember who got them elected and to confront "right to work." hence unlikely to take a real bite out of income inequality in Virginia.

I am assured that ERA ratification is a real priority on the agenda. Also, there may be more willingness to address gun violence, which in Virginia is remarkable. For example, universal background checks and a ban on large capacity magazines and bump stocks are already being discussed and deemed likely to pass. In Vir-



INDEPENDENT PROGRESSIVE

ginia, this one falls under the category of I'll believe it when I see the Governor's signature on the actual pieces of legislation. Banning assault weapons much less buying back those already in circulation, while crucial to reducing the killings, are definitely a bridge too far for the new majority,

Increased funding for pre-school education and expanded health insurance coverage have strong backing and may make it through the legislative minefields as long as no noticeable increases in taxes are required to implement them! One prominent local legislator suggests tax increases are unlikely in the first General Assembly session. This would suggest that it may be feasible in the subsequent GA. Really?!? A tax increase in the second year of the delegates' term as they face election? No way! Will not happen. For me, the biggest shock, and a tie for biggest disappointment along with the bleak outlook for "right to work" repeal, is what I've seen in the Post and gotten talking to a state senator that the constitutional amendment reforming redistricting (a dagger

to the heart of gerrymandering) is in jeopardy. The amendment passed the outgoing legislature and was presumed a slam dunk in the 2020 session, thus meeting the Virginia requirement of a second passage to effect an amendment to the constitution, is in jeopardy. Sen. Dick Saslaw, long time Senate Minority Leader and now returned to his old Majority Leader status, is a big fan of gerrymandering and anxious to avenge what Republicans did to Democrats for many years. Saslaw, who unfortunately barely beat rising star Yasmine Taeb in a primary, and others may scuttle the excellent compromise amendment that would create a commission to draw maps consisting of 8 citizens and 8 legislators, evenly divided by party and requiring a supermajority of both sides to approve a new map. This requires a genuine consensus and is regarded as one of the strongest redistricting reforms undertaken to date in the U.S. If Saslaw and friends succeed in killing the amendment, maps reflecting the new 2020 census will be gerrymandered as before except that the Democrats, not Republicans, will dictate the outcomes. Reform would be delayed until at least the 2030 census.

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HOLIDAY FUN



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FAIRFAX BALLET COMPANY

Oakton High School's Nicole Shortle and GMU's Carlos Martinez dance "The Nutcracker."

Fairfax Ballet Company Presents 'The Nutcracker'

BY DENISE LEW
THE CONNECTION

Upcoming Performances

The Fairfax Ballet Company presented "The Nutcracker" on opening night, on Saturday, Nov. 30 at W.T. Woodson High School in Fairfax.

"The Nutcracker" was truly a spectacle for the community to see. It was accompanied with beautiful wintry sets, new colorful snow costumes and a multitude of dancers. The production took the audience through the experiences of Clara and her beloved Nutcracker — including a suspenseful battle with mice, magical wintry scenes, and exotic international dances.

Two main dancers from the local community are featured in the family holiday classic. Nicole Shortle, a sophomore at Oakton High School, danced as Clara, while George Mason University's Carlos Martinez, a sophomore in the dance program, performed as

the Nutcracker Prince. Professional guest artists included Richmond Ballet's Matt Szentes as Cavalier, Cody Beaton as the Sugar Plum Fairy, and Philip Smith-Cobbs as the Mouse King, Mechanical Doll, and Arabian Coffee.

Since 1991, the FBC has been performing this production for the surrounding community. "We are continually looking for opportunities to give back and remind the dancers that dance can have a larger impact... and we are always looking for special experiences for our dancers and community members to engage in together," said Andrea Cook, artistic director at FBC.



Nicole Shortle, a sophomore at Oakton High School.



Carlos Martinez, a sophomore at GMU.

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WELLBEING

Maintaining Peace on Earth (and at Home)

Preserving your family's wellbeing during the holidays.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

For many, December will be filled with sugar-laden holiday parties, lengthy-shopping trips and long lines for a chance to sit on Santa's lap. For families that thrive on routine, holiday merriment can lead to schedule disruptions that throw a family's rhythm into disarray. Maintaining the wellbeing of both parents and children during the season takes a bit of advanced planning.

"Children, just like adults, need both energetic time and rest time embedded throughout the day," said psychologist Carolyn Lorente, Ph.D. of Northern Virginia Community College and Belle Point Wellness Center. "During the holidays, this natural rhythm can easily get disrupted."

Keep the holidays in the proper perspective and remember that the season is for a finite period of time and one's normal routine will be restored, says therapist Carol Barnaby, LCSW-C. "The biggest stress that people often have is feeling that they are being judged by others if their children are having a hard time. I tell my patients to focus on the things that they can control and remember, other people have once been in their shoes."

Providing opportunities for an emotional outlet can help with mood stabilization. "Make sure that [children] have enough outdoor play paired with quiet down time throughout their day," said Lorente. "Model for them how to find a quiet space to retreat to when things start to heat up."

When parents are able to exhibit a sense of tranquility during a period of chaos, children often mimic this emotional response. "Remain calm and stay patient," added Joanne Bagshaw, PhD Professor of Psychology Montgomery College. "Emotions are contagious, and your ability to remain calm under pressure is great role modeling for young children and can help prevent strong emotions from escalating."

When in new and unfamiliar social settings, some children need more time than others to adjust to the social demands, says Lorente. "Know your child," she said. "Some will make these transitions quite easily while many will find this challenging. Remember that our first job is to teach. And children learn best by watching how we handle the stressors of the season."

In fact, reflecting on a child's temperament can



PHOTO BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

The merriment of the holidays can disrupt a family's sense of wellbeing.

serve as a guide for parents as they navigate the impact of a disputed schedule. "This is a time to go with what you know about your child," said psychologist Stacie Isenberg Psy. D. "Some kids can push bed-

time and sugar every so often, with little to no negative effects. If this describes your child, stay later than usual and enjoy the special occasion. If this is not your child, you and your child are likely to become miserable by pushing the limits that night and very likely the next day or maybe two,"

Returning to normalcy as often as possible can preserve a family's wellbeing during the holiday season, suggests Jerome Short, Ph.D., professor of psychology at George Mason University. "Maintain household routines leading up to holiday events, such as regular meal, play, and bed times for children," he said. "Plenty of sleep, including naps, helps children with their attention spans, mood regulation, and self-control of their

"The biggest stress that people often have is feeling that they are being judged by others if their children are having a hard time. I tell my patients to focus on the things that they can control and remember, other people have once been in their shoes."

— Carol Barnaby, LCSW-C

behaviors,"

"Put limits around bedtime and sugar consumption that match your child's physiological and emotional abilities and you'll all have the best experience," added Isenberg.

Nutrition plays a role in mood and behavior especially during the holidays. "Keep some protein heavy snacks handy, like cheese sticks, or nuts if your child doesn't have allergies," said Bagshaw. "Snacks filled with protein can help stabilize blood sugar, and young children's moods."

Explaining to a child what they can expect at holiday event can mitigate meltdowns. "Make a plan with your partner and set realistic expectations on how long you will stay at events," said Barnaby. "This is often the best thing couples can do to manage stress and frustration that leads to conflict. Take turns in managing the children so that each of you can have some fun."

Pentagon's Perspective on Climate Change

Library hosts author Michael T. Klare; his book: "All Hell Breaking Loose."

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Extrême climate effects as a danger and primary concern of United States national security; that was the topic Nov. 14, when Reston Regional Library partnered with Scrawl Books to host author Michael T. Klare for a discussion, sale and signing of his just-published book, "All Hell Breaking Loose: The Pentagon's Perspective on Climate Change."

Klare is a defense correspondent, Director of the Five College Program in Peace and World Security Studies at Hampshire College, and a senior visiting fellow at the Arms Control Association. Klare is also the author of fourteen other books, including Resource Wars (2001), Blood and Oil (2004), Rising Power, Shrinking Planet (2008) and The Race for What's Left (2012).

Before Klare began his formal presentation and discussion at the library, patrons said what prompted them to come to the educational program offered through the Fairfax County Library System. Trudy Bell of Reston: "I'm here to learn more. I know nothing about how climate change impacts the military."

Ruth Percival, Reston: "I'm here to learn about how climate change impacts all areas of life. I do believe recycling and conserving energy all have an impact."

Daniel Volman of the District of Columbia: "I'm an old friend and long-time supporter of the author. I read military policy."

Ben Taylor of Reston: "Katherine Murphy of Reston brought me on a date to the library. I'm interested in the topic."

ACCORDING TO KLARE, the U.S. military may not seem a likely institution to be worried about climate change; however, international competition over resources such as freshwater and land has led to conflict. "As I began to be involved in this research, over time, it became very clear that conflict occurred as waters rose, as rising temperatures flooded many areas of the world. Precipitation would drop, and it was harder to grow crops. Food supplies would disappear ... and this would likely increase competition over scarce resources," he said. In the last ten years, Klare said as he continued his research, he discovered he was not alone in examining the relationship between climate change and its peril of resource scarcity and conflict.

"I discovered the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) was also researching the same topic... That got me very interested. Why is the DOD so interested in climate change and its consequences... this isn't exactly a military matter," he said. According to Klare, he spent the last five years researching the Pentagon's study of climate change and its impact on U.S. national security. He visited



Author Michael T. Klare answers questions during the book discussion for his newly released examination of climate change, "All Hell Breaking Loose," held at Reston Regional Library Nov. 14.



PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



Patrons line up to purchase Klare's book "All Hell Breaking Loose: The Pentagon's Perspective on Climate Change."

bases. He conducted interviews with current and retired officers and asked them what the highest priority of the U.S. military was today

"They would say it is preparing for a conflict with Russia or China. No question about it ... counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, but that era is now over. Our adversaries have used that time to beef up their military, so we must compete at a high level with Russia with China... Talk deeper with the officials, and you see they have this other concern about climate change. They believe their ability to pursue their primary concern, gearing up for a great power conflict, is being undermined by climate change and will become more so each day as we move into the future."

As examples, Klare said as sea-level rise and more intense storms occurred, what once were nuisance floodings would turn disastrous for east and west coast bases like

Naval Station Norfolk, the nation's largest naval base and Naval Base San Diego, the second-largest Surface Ship base of the United States Navy. Also, instead of the United States military fighting on the battlefields of foreign war, they could be fighting domestic crises such as looters on the home front.

"And this is not what they want to do. They will see that there will be these complex emergencies, where the government will collapse, and they will have to step in and perform that role." Klare said the United States (and other countries, China and Russia) would be committing their military forces more and more to disaster relief at home too.

IN ONLINE REVIEWS of his book, Klare provided quotes by General Ron Keys, United States Air Force (Retired), chairman of the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA)

Military Advisory Board and John Conger, former Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller).

"Michael Klare has done a masterful job of capturing key points in the U.S. military's pragmatic approach to climate change. As he shows, the military is building resilience in its own training, testing, and ability to respond, and is clear-eyed about warming's effects in catalyzing chaos and crises abroad that it may be called upon to respond to." - Keys

"Michael Klare does an exemplary job of recounting not only how military leaders view climate change differently than politicians on either end of the political spectrum, but why they do so. Seamlessly weaving together a narrative of Pentagon reports and compelling testimony, he shows that the military sees climate change as a threat to its capacity to defend the nation." - Conger

IN THE BOOK'S FINAL SENTENCES, Klare said, "In time, perhaps under a new administration, these voices will be heard more widely, and we will all benefit from these officers' valuable insights. Until then, hopefully, this book can provide a useful synthesis of the U.S. military's analysis of the consequences of climate change and the measures it is taking to guard against those consequences and reduce their severity."

"All Hell Breaking Loose: The Pentagon's Perspective on Climate Change," is available at Scrawl Books in Reston Town Center Reston, Amazon, Fairfax County libraries and other venues.

According to Fairfax County: "The library presents and hosts events on a range of topics of interest to the Fairfax County community. We strive to sponsor events that educate and entertain while connecting people with others who share common interests and goals." Visit: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/events for more information.

HOLIDAY FUN

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

ONGOING

Burke Farmers Market. Through Dec. 21, 8 a.m.-noon at the VRE parking lot, 5671 Roberts Parkway, Burke. Call 703-642-0128 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/burke for more.

Give the Gift of Original Art. Now thru Jan. 5. At Torpedo Factory Artists at Mosaic, 2905 District Ave., #105, Fairfax. Open Wednesday thru Sunday 11 – 7 p.m. You can find extraordinary fine art that makes great gifts this holiday season — the work of highly-acclaimed Torpedo Factory Artists — at their satellite space in Merrifield. Beautiful paintings, fine-art photographs, one-of-a-kind jewelry, scarves, ceramics and much more.

PJ Party + Santa’s Arrival. At Springfield Town Center, Springfield. Welcome Santa with a Pajama Party. Get in the holiday spirit with caroling, hot coco and watch as Santa arrives in style with Fairfax police and fire. Santa’s visiting hours will be as follows: Now through Dec. 13; Monday – Saturday: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Sunday: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Dec. 14 thru Dec. 23: Monday – Saturday: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Sunday: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.; and Christmas Eve: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

NOW THRU DEC. 20

Fairfax City Elf Hunt. 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Takes place Fairfax City-wide, start point: Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Locate 10 elves in Fairfax City businesses, get a stamp from each business confirming that you found the elf; share the Fairfax City Elf Hunt card with us at economicdevelopment@fairfaxva.gov. Once you have submitted your Fairfax City Elf Hunt card, you will receive a Fairfax City car magnet and have your name entered into a drawing for a \$250 cash prize. Completed cards must be received by Dec. 16 to be eligible. Free to participate; patrons are encouraged to purchase items when they visit businesses. Visit the website: <https://fairfaxcityconnected.com/2019/10/08/elfhunt/#prettyPhoto>

DEC. 6-7

Norwegian Christmas Festival. Friday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Christ Lutheran Church, 3810 Meredith Drive, Fairfax. Free Admission. Live music, dancing, fjord horses on Saturday. Food and craft demonstrations. Imported foods (nokkelost), fresh lefse and krumkake made onsite, Nordic Cafe, huge gift selection including books, linens, authentic Scandinavian sweaters. Free. Visit the website: www.norwaydc.org.

SATURDAY/DEC. 7

Christmastide at Gunston Hall. 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. At George Mason’s Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Road, Lorton. Celebrate a holiday tradition at Gunston Hall! Daytime activities include children’s crafts, Santa, games, and an indoor snowball fight. The evening hours provide a romantic holiday experience by candlelight as guests are invited to sample period food in the kitchen, explore the grounds, enjoy 18th century music, and chat with characters from the past. Cost: \$15 adults, \$10 children (ages 6 – 18), and members receive a 50% discount. gunstonhall.org/event/christmastide-at-gunston-hall/

Christmas Party. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Twins Ace Hardware, 10310-B Main Street, Fairfax. Fun-filled activities include: Live grill demo from celebrity Ace grilling chef Jason K Morse of 5280 Culinary; BBQ Provisions & Team Traeger Grills; free goodie bags to the first 150 people at 11 a.m.; delicious apps and deserts; special appearance from children’s author Lindsay Barry; photos with Santa; letters to Santa activity; decorating ideas; giveaways, demos and more. Visit the website: www.twinsacehardware.com.

DEC. 7-8

”The Nutcracker.” 12 p.m. and 5 p.m. At Richard J. Ernst Community Cultural Center, 8333 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. Metropolitan School of the Arts’ Nutcracker brings to life the gift of imagination with Clara and her Nutcracker in a magical journey from her Victorian home through the Land of Snow and into the Land of Sweets, with dazzling dancing, a larger-than-life Christmas tree, more than 100 dancers, and



The Cathedral Brass Concert

The Cathedral Brass will put on a concert on Saturday, Dec. 7 at Living Savior Lutheran Church in Fairfax Station.

SATURDAY/DEC. 7

Cathedral Brass Concert. 6-7 p.m. At Living Savior Lutheran Church, 5500 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Join in a family friendly, free Christmas concert featuring The Cathedral Brass. All are welcome. Visit the website: www.livingsaviorlutheran.org



U.S. Army Chorus Concert

The U.S. Army Chorus puts on a concert on Saturday, Dec. 14 at Westwood Baptist Church in Springfield.

SATURDAY/DEC. 14

U.S. Army Chorus Concert. 3-5 p.m. At Westwood Baptist Church, 8200 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. The U.S. Army Chorus will perform a free community concert. Don’t miss your chance to hear The U.S. Army Chorus when they return to Westwood Baptist Church for an afternoon of holiday nostalgia that is sure to enhance your patriotism and Advent preparations. Contact usarmyband.com or the church at 703-451-5120.

Tchaikovsky’s glorious score. Tickets \$26 to \$28. Go to www.metropolitanarts.org to purchase tickets.

Winter Wonderland. 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. At Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. At Winter Wonderland, you can hop a train ride on the Holiday Express, take unlimited spins on the Carolers Carousel, play Gingerbread Man Golf or cook s’mores by the fire. Visit with Santa and enjoy hot chocolate or cider and candy canes. Five-hour passes are \$15 in advance and \$20 on the event day. The park will also be accepting new toys or canned food items for donation. In the evenings, enjoy a magical train ride through a forest decorated with holiday-themed lights and scenes. Celebration Station runs the same weekends as Winter Wonderland, but will take place on Friday and Saturday evenings from 6 to 9 p.m. Celebration Station tickets are \$10 each; trains depart every 20 minutes. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/burke-lake.

”The Nutcracker.” Saturday at 8 p.m.; Sunday at 3 p.m. At Centreville High School, 6001 Union Mill Road, Clifton. Mia Saunders School of Ballet presents “The Nutcracker.” The 2019 production of “The Nutcracker” marks the first

for new MSB Artistic Director Hannah Woodruff, an alumna of MSB and 2017 graduate of University of Virginia. Proceeds for this annual giving tradition will benefit CVHS Drama Scholarships and the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research. Tickets are \$12, (cash or checks payable to CVHS Drama Boosters only) and are available at the door. Visit the website: <http://miasaundersballet.com/>

SUNDAY/DEC. 8

”Little Drummer Dude.” 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. At Jubilee Christian Center, 4650 Shirley Gate Road, Fairfax. A children’s musical, “Little Drummer Dude” takes place during the time Jesus was born and we see the story through the eyes of the wise men, a traveling band and a little drummer dude. Free. jccag.org.

TUESDAY-WEDNESDAY, DEC. 10-11

Moscow Ballet’s “The Nutcracker.” 7 p.m. At GMU’s Concert Hall, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. The Moscow Ballet “Dance with Us” cast will perform their ancillary roles as Party Children, Snowflakes, Mice, Snow Maidens and Variation Dancers. The aspiring ballerinas and

danseurs, ages 7 to 17, perform in ancillary roles developed for their age and skill level by dancer, choreographer, and Julliard graduate Mary Giannone Talmi, also co-producer of Moscow Ballet’s North American tours. Tickets are \$34 to \$180.

DEC. 13-22

ETAP’s “Finding Santa.” 12 show times over 2 weekends, Friday, Saturday and Sunday 7:30 p.m., 12 p.m. and 4 p.m. At Richard J. Ernst Theatre, Annandale NOVA Campus, 8333 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. Encore Theatrical Arts Project presents a new holiday musical, “Finding Santa.” Cost is \$19-\$26. This song and dance musical features over 30 performers, creative choreography, elaborate sets, over 165 costumes, and over 16 musical numbers. Come see all the glamour of a Broadway-style show right here in Northern Virginia. Appropriate for audiences of all ages Visit the website: www.Encore-tap.org

SATURDAY/DEC. 14

Annual Christmas Musical. 6 p.m. At Greater Little Zion Baptist Church, 10185 Zion Drive, Fairfax. The Ministry of Music and Performing Arts of Greater Little Zion Baptist Church in Fairfax presents its Annual Christmas Musical, No Ordinary Night, a special service to celebrate the birth of our Savior in narration, music, song, and dance. Featured will be the Greater Little Zion choirs and praise dancers, along with a special performance by recording artist and renown pianist, Bro. Jeff Corry. Free. Call 703-239-9111.

DEC. 14-15

Winter Wonderland. Noon to 5 p.m. At Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. At Winter Wonderland, you can hop a train ride on the Holiday Express, take unlimited spins on the Carolers Carousel, play Gingerbread Man Golf or cook s’mores by the fire. Visit with Santa and enjoy hot chocolate or cider and candy canes. Five-hour passes are \$15 in advance and \$20 on the event day. The park will also be accepting new toys or canned food items for donation. In the evenings, enjoy a magical train ride through a forest decorated with holiday-themed lights and scenes. Celebration Station runs the same weekends as Winter Wonderland, but will take place on Friday and Saturday evenings from 6 to 9 p.m. Celebration Station ticket are \$10 each; trains depart every 20 minutes. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/burke-lake.

Bethlehem Walk. 3-7 p.m. At Parkwood Baptist Church, 8726 Braddock Road, Annandale. Get in the Christmas spirit walking through the narrow streets of Bethlehem. Haggle with shop owners, sidestep tax collectors, avoid the Roman centurions on your way to the manger scene. Hundreds of families make the trek each year to a replica of the holy city, raised by Parkwood Baptist Church. Features re-enactors, live music, children’s crafts, games. Live nativity scene. Free. Ample parking. Reserve advance tickets at www.parkwood.org. For details call 703-978-8160.

SUNDAY/DEC. 15

Santa Visit. 2 p.m. At Amerian Legion Post 176 Springfield, located at 6520 Amherst Ave., Springfield. Santa is coming to The American Legion Post 176 Springfield.

Events in Alexandria

FRIDAY-SATURDAY/DEC. 6-7

The Scottish Christmas Walk Weekend. At various Old Town Alexandria locations. The Campagna Center presents the 49th Annual Scottish Christmas Walk Weekend and Parade. The parade is Dec. 7 at 11 a.m. and begins at St. Asaph and Wolfe Streets and concludes at Market Square with a massed band concert. Admission: Free for parade and Heather and Greens Sales; \$180-\$290 for Taste of Scotland; \$40 for Holiday Home Tours. In 1749, the City of Alexandria was officially established by three Scottish merchants and named after its original founder, John Alexander, also of Scottish descent. Through your support of the events of The Scottish Christmas Walk Weekend, you provide vital support to Campagna Center programs that serve more than 2,000 children, teens, and adults throughout the year. Visit the website: <https://www.campagnacenter.org/scottishwalkweekend>

SATURDAY/DEC. 7

Boat Parade of Lights. Parade begins at 5:30 p.m.; Dockside festivities 2 to 8 p.m. At Waterfront Park, 1 King Street, Alexandria. Parade viewing areas: Founders Park (351 N.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 10

CAPPIES REVIEW

‘Curious Incident’ at Robinson Stage

BY ABIGAIL JOHNSON
TUSCARORA HIGH SCHOOL

The crowd murmurs with anticipation, waiting for the show to begin. The multiple constellations are seen everywhere on stage, spreading curiosity throughout the audience. The lights start to dim, and the crowd is silent. A spotlight hits center stage, and Robinson Secondary School’s production of “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time” begins.

The “Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time” was adapted by Simon Stephens and based on the novel with the same name by Mark Haddon. The play premiered in London in 2013 and then moved to Broadway in 2014. The story follows a young boy named Christopher Boone who has an autism spectrum condition, but that doesn’t stop him from being a genius in math, and investigating the death of his neighbor’s dog.

The cast of “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time” works together to create an insight into the life of someone who has an autism spectrum condition. Each cast member works in harmony with one another, to create these dramatic scenes.

The life of Christopher Boone is a diffi-



PHOTO BY JULIA MACINNIS PHOTOGRAPHY

Harry MacInnis and Becca Diggs in the Robinson Secondary School’s production of ‘The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time.’

cult role, yet actor Harry MacInnis portrayed him perfectly. MacInnis captured both Christopher’s comedic and genius side, as well as, Christopher’s panicked, autistic side, where every tick and every action seemed very realistic. You could also see his authentic connection with his parents, and his mentor Siobhan, played by Becca Diggs.

Diggs added a realistic sense of security for Christopher, and did a fantastic job. MacInnis’ connection with his parents Ed and Judy played by Amari Lewis, and Taegan Pratt, was also truthful. Both actors portrayed their characters with grace. You could see what they were going through by their actions and facial expressions.

The ensemble added amazing effects to the play, with every action they took. Mrs. Alexander played by Lily Brintzinghoffer, added perfect comedic timing and never failed to make the audience laugh. In the scenes where Christopher was in the train station, or when he was searching for his book, the ensemble worked together to create chaos. Pieces of furniture were used to generate Christopher’s views of his surroundings. Even though the ensemble was onstage during the entire play, they were always in character, and focused on their surroundings.

From the makeup team representing authentic old age makeup, to the costumers incorporating Christopher’s favorite and least favorite colors into the people around him, and to the brilliant minds of the scenic and lighting designers, every technical aspect of this show was creative, beautiful, and very well thought out. The concept of red and yellow in the costumes and lighting enhanced Christopher’s thoughts and actions throughout the show, and the incorporation of constellations and stars onstage were beautiful and eye-catching.

Robinson Secondary School’s production of “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time” was brilliant in all ways, and transformed the lives of every audience member.

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CALENDAR

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Announcements

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Announcements

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FredericksburgExpoCenter.com

HOURS
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Sun, Dec 8: 11 am - 4 pm

ADMISSION
Tickets are Good all 3 days
Adult At Door: \$8, Online: \$7*,
Senior at Door (60+): \$7, Online \$6*
FRIDAY ONLY SENIOR AT DOOR: \$5
Kids 12 & Under Free, *processing fee

FREDERICKSBURGHOLIDAYCRAFTSHOW.COM

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THE CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

back to 2008 are available at

<http://connectionarchives.com/PDF>

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 8

Union St.), Alexandria City Marina (0 Cameron St.), Waterfront Park (1 King St. and 1A Prince St.), Point Lumley Park (1 Duke St.), Shipyard/Harborside Park (1 Wilkes St.), Windmill Hill Park (501 S. Union St.) and Ford's Landing Park (99 Franklin St.). Admission: Free; \$ for food/drink and some activities.
VisitAlexandriaVA.com/boatparade

Local Calendar

DEC. 5-7

Winter Book Sale. Thursday, Dec 5: 3 – 9 p.m.; Friday, Dec 6: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.; and Saturday, Dec 7: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. At Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce Street, Springfield. Over 10,000 like new books in all categories both rare and popular most at \$2 or less, plus loads of CDs, DVDs and special gift offerings. Over 3,000 children's books, too. Funds raised will pay for children's programs and more. Contact Judy Perry at rbfriends@gmail.com.

FRIDAY/DEC. 6

4th Annual Holiday Bazaar. 5:30 - 9 p.m. At Union Mill Elementary School, 13611 Springstone Drive, Clifton. Stop by and enjoy one-stop shopping: Crafts, Jewelry, Makeup, Clothing, Gourmet coffee and sweets, popcorn, woodworking, gift wrapping and more. Still accepting vendors: Umesholidaybazaar@gmail.com

SATURDAY/DEC. 7

Kids Fun Run. 8 a.m. to noon. At South County High School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Lorton. Join us in supporting the South County Swim and Dive Team at the Annual Candy Cane Fun Run, for kids age 12 and under, which takes place before the Annual Lorton Holiday Extravaganza. Schedule: 8 a.m. packet pick-up, race day signup; 8:20 a.m. Santa arrives; 8:30 a.m. Fun Run begins. The run will be approximately 100 yards (10 and over) and approximately 50 yards (9 and under). Come wearing your best red and white holiday attire. Cost is \$10-\$15. www.eventbrite.com/e/candy-cane-kids-fun-run-2019-tickets-75843192029

Bread & Beauty. 12:30-1:30 p.m. At City of Fairfax Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. It's a recipe for a better life. Cookbook, travel guide and local history, "Bread and Beauty" shows how our farm heritage can help sustain us in the 21st century. Free. Contact Liz Milner at elizabeth.milner@fairfaxcounty.gov www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/events

Holiday-Themed Tours. 2-5 p.m. At Historic Ratcliffe-Allison-Pozer House, 10386 Main Street, Fairfax. Discover holiday customs from the 19th and early 20th centuries during docent-led tours. Hear the first Christmas card message sent by President Calvin Coolidge. Tour also includes a World War I exhibit. Free. Call 703-385-8414. www.fairfaxva.gov/visitors

Sweet Honey in the Rock — Celebrating the Holydays. 4 p.m. At George Mason University Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. With five-part harmonies and sign language interpretation, Sweet Honey's sound ranges from African to blues to gospel and jazz. Celebrating the Holydays offers a rare fusion of traditional American holiday spiritual songs and hymns, as well as songs from other cultures and religions ranging from Africa to Israel. Tickets are \$30-\$50. www.cfa.gmu.edu

Singles Dinner & Movie Night. 5 p.m. At Uncle Julios, 5251 Fairfax Corner Ave., Fairfax. Fixed price



Moscow Ballet's "The Nutcracker"

The Moscow Ballet will present "The Nutcracker" on Dec. 10-11 at GMU's Concert Hall.

TUESDAY-WEDNESDAY, DEC. 10-11

Moscow Ballet's "The Nutcracker." 7 p.m. At GMU's Concert Hall, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. The Moscow Ballet "Dance with Us" cast will perform their ancillary roles as Party Children, Snowflakes, Mice, Snow Maidens and Variation Dancers. The aspiring ballerinas and danseurs, ages 7 to 17, perform in ancillary roles developed for their age and skill level by dancer, choreographer, and Julliard graduate Mary Giannone Talmi, also co-producer of Moscow Ballet's North American tours. Tickets are \$34 to \$180.



The Norwegian Christmas Festival

The Nordic Dancers will perform on Saturday, Dec. 7 at 2 p.m. at the Norwegian Christmas Festival.

DEC. 6-7

Norwegian Christmas Festival. Friday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Christ Lutheran Church, 3810 Meredith Drive, Fairfax. Free Admission. Live music, dancing, fjord horses on Saturday. Food and craft demonstrations. Imported foods (nokkelost), fresh lefse and krumkake made onsite, Nordic Cafe, huge gift selection including books, linens, authentic Scandinavian sweaters. Free. Visit the website www.norwaydc.org.

dinner followed by movie of your choice at Rave Fairfax Corner 14. Cost includes dinner, soda, tip and movie ticket. RSVP required. Cost is \$35 at door. Email Carol Randolph at NewBCarol@verizon.net. Sponsored by New Beginnings, a support group for separated/divorced men and women. Call 301-924-4101 or visit www.newbeginningsusa.org.

Cathedral Brass Concert. 6-7 p.m. At Living Savior Lutheran Church, 5500 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Join in a family friendly, free Christmas concert featuring The Cathedral Brass. All are welcome. Visit the website: www.livingsaviorlutheran.org

DEC. 7-8

Holiday Arts & Crafts Show. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday; and 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Sunday. At Audrey

Moore RECenter, 8100 Braddock Road, Annandale. Find one-of-a-kind gifts for everyone on your list this season at the 42nd Annual Holiday Arts and Crafts Show. Nearly 100 of the area's finest artisans. Door prizes will be awarded, too. Admission is \$2 per person; children age 12 and under are admitted free.

Holiday Train Show. Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday noon to 4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Bring your broken locomotive to the "Train Doctor" for the good doctor to fix or advise you of your other options. Santa may stop by to visit. Cost: adults 16 and over - \$5; children 5 to 15 - \$2; 4 and under - free; museum members - free. Visit the website: www.fairfax-station.org or call 703-425-9225.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Meetings in 2019

12000 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, VA 22035
Dec. 10 Committee Meetings
9:30 a.m. - Health, Housing and Human Services Committee
11 a.m. - Development Process Committee
1:30 p.m. - Transportation Committee
3 p.m. - General Assembly Annual Reception and Work Session

THURSDAY/DEC. 5

Transportation Meeting. 7-9 p.m. At Garfield Elementary School, 7101 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) will hold a community input meeting to encourage public input on alternatives developed to provide enhanced Fairfax Connector bus service (Routes 310, 321, 322) in the Franconia and Springfield areas. The service alternatives were developed based on the first round of public input received through community engagement, stakeholder engagement and technical analysis. After this round of public engagement, FCDOT staff will develop a preferred service plan based on public input received and further technical analysis to provide better access to destinations, improved travel times, increased schedule reliability and more dependable service. The community will have an opportunity to review and comment on the preferred service plan in Spring 2020. Residents are encouraged to provide input on the service alternatives by filling out an online survey. (Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/franconia-springfield-optimization>) The survey will be open from now thru Dec. 17, 2019. Mail comments to Fairfax County Department of Transportation, 4050 Legato Road, Suite 400, Fairfax, VA 22033.

SUNDAY/DEC. 8

Low Cost Rabies Vaccine Clinic. Noon-2 p.m. at West Springfield Governmental Center, 6140 Rolling Road, Springfield. Cost is \$15 per pet, cash and check only. Dogs, cats, and ferrets may be vaccinated at the clinic. Dogs must be on leashes; cats and ferrets must be in carriers. All pets will receive a 1-year rabies vaccination. To obtain a 3-year vaccine, bring pet's rabies certificate (not tag) showing the current rabies vaccination expiration date. 2019 county dog licenses will be sold for an additional \$10 per license. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/animalshelter/communityassistance/rabiesclinics for more.

SATURDAY/DEC. 14

Coffee with Del. Bulova. 9-11 a.m. At Main Street Bagel, 10268 Main Street, City of Fairfax. Del. David Bulova (D-Fairfax) will continue a tradition started in 2006 by holding informal office hours to take place from 9 to 11 a.m.. Constituents are invited to talk about issues of interest and to ask questions about legislation affecting our community. The format is casual and no appointment is needed. Bulova is also happy to arrange individual appointments on specific issues or concerns. He represents Virginia's 37th House District, which includes the City of Fairfax and portions of Fairfax County. Visit www.davidbulova.com.

PN Support Group. 2-4 p.m. At Mason District Government Center, 6507 Columbia Pike, Annandale. PN Support Group monthly meeting. Share information, experience, hope and news about Peripheral Neuropathy among fellow sufferers. Guest speaker and group discussions. Visit the website: www.dcpnsupport.org.

TUESDAY/DEC. 17

Lions Dinner Meeting. 6:30-8:30 p.m. at American Legion Post 177, 3939 Oak St., Fairfax. Lions Club meets the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month. Guests are welcome to learn about the mission of the Lions Clubs "We Serve," meet club members and learn to help serve the community. Free to first time guests. Email fairfaxlions@cox.net or visit www.fairfaxlions.org for more.

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False Sense of Security



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I never want to look a gift-oncologist in the mouth or take a "stable"-type CT scan with a grain of salt, however; self-preservation is a funny instinct. It can change from day to day (heck, even hour to hour) and dominate your pre-occupation or intrude your thinking not at all. You can rationalize away the good, bad or indifferent (results) or irrationalize away the less-than-expected or the more-than-anticipated. Results from lab work and/or diagnostic scans are the axis on which your entire life revolves. You either roll with the punches or you get knocked down by them. For a cancer patient, the punches often keep coming.

The punches thrown in my direction occur bi-weekly when I have my pre-immunotherapy lab work for my every-other Friday 30-minute opdivo infusion. (Although the actual lab work and even the infusion is more of a jab.) The left hook/right cross combination occurs quarterly. That's when I slide through the computerized tomography scan and wait for results (as I had been for most of the last week). Since I have generally been asymptomatic - other than for miscellaneous side effects from the various medicines with which I've been infused, the tale of the tape, to continue the boxing references, happens when my oncologist emails the radiologist's report to me with a brief sentence summary: "a little worse" (this time), "stable," or something less discouraging that needs to be discussed at our next face-to-face appointment which generally is scheduled a week or so after the previous week's scan.

Regardless of what these mostly cryptic emails have said, until I hear exactly what my oncologist says, I am neither too high or too low. Granted, hearing "stable" is extremely encouraging whereas "a little worse, not so much. Nevertheless, the fight goes on. Cancer treatment is a series of actions and reactions (punches and counter punches, you might even say) so depending on how one's body reacts, determines what action is recommended. I am living proof, literally. Over my nearly 11 years of treatment, I have been infused with upwards of a dozen different medicines. Once one treatment loses its luster, we change to another hoping it will be more effective, and so on. It's science, not arithmetic. As such, any guarantees left the building with Elvis.

Being a cancer patient is not for everybody. One has to make the most of the least. It's easy to let the hard facts make you soft. Unless you find a way to be up, the cancer will take you down. Somehow, even when it's doing the worst to you, you have to be at your best. Being positive generates positivity in return. When I look at people, I try to smile so that they'll smile back (I'm being selfish, really). Do you remember George Costanza describing the look of disappointment on his mother's face when he told her he wanted to play the accordion? Like that, only the complete opposite.

When I interact with people, I don't want them to feel "poor, poor, pitiful me" to quote Warren Zevon from his song first sung in 1976. And I don't want them to see cancer either. I want them to see everything about me. I may be diagnosed with a terminal form of cancer: stage IV, non-small cell lung cancer, but I don't want to be defined by it. Just because I'm living with cancer doesn't mean it's who I am. It's what I have, that's all.

And what reminds most me that I have cancer and what challenges my reactions to it more than anything, is when I have these quarterly CT scans (and the annual MRI, too). As much as I try to fend off the possible effect on my mortality (my true sense of insecurity), I'd be lying if I said I was always successful. In truth, I'm always worried about it. How could I not be? I guess I'm not quite ready to throw in the towel. I suppose that means, regardless of what my oncologist says at our next meeting, I'm still ready to live and fight another day.

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



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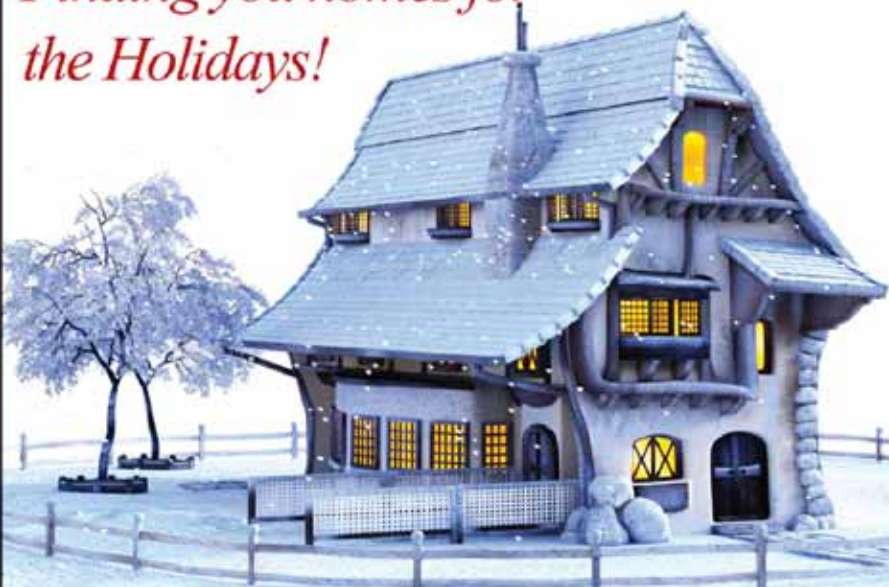


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