

Oak Hill Herndon CONNECTION

Shaping An Optimal Future

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PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

A team of five friends ages 10-11 who attend Floris Elementary School in Herndon won the third-place Championship trophy at the FIRST LEGO League Competition. From bottom to top, left to right, Varenya Immidiseti, Arjun Krishnamurthy, Srinika Kallem, Sanya Bhalla, Ayush Tripathy.

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Food For Neighbors Expands as Need to Fight Teen Hunger Continues

More and more Northern Virginia schools are reaching out to Food For Neighbors to address prevalent food insecurity among teenagers, who lack a reliable source of nutrition over weekends. As Food For Neighbors expands its services, it heavily relies on volunteers to donate approximately \$25 of food five times per year. Volunteering is easy, and it makes an immediate impact on students. <https://www.foodforneighbors.org/get-involved/>

"I'm so thankful to our volunteers and partners who allow Food For Neighbors to say 'yes' when a new school asks for help," said Food For Neighbors founder, Karen Joseph. "Currently, we're looking for 'Red Bag' food program participants in the Falls Church area, to which we're expanding services in early 2020."

AN ALL-VOLUNTEER CHARITY, Food For Neighbors has rapidly grown from serving over more than 100 students at Herndon Middle School and Herndon High School, to serving nearly 1,000 students. In addition to supporting its original Herndon schools and newly-added Falls Church schools, Food For Neighbors provides weekly food assistance to Irving, Key, Jackson, Whitman, and Carl Sandburg Middle Schools as well as to West Springfield, Lee, Bryant, Mountain View, West Potomac, and Mount Vernon High Schools. The program

has moved into nearby Loudoun County schools including Sterling Middle School, Park View High School, River Bend Middle School, and Potomac Falls High School, and the nonprofit also provides supplemental food to Langston Hughes Middle School and the South Lakes High School food pantry. This is tremendous growth given that the nonprofit is only in its fourth year of existence.

"I was shocked to find that, in Fairfax County, one in four children go hungry every day," noted Karen Joseph. "To me, that meant that it could be the children next door, around the corner, or down the street who are struggling with basic nutrition. Our children's peers in their classrooms could be struggling to learn, pay attention, or stay focused as a result of being hungry. Mark and I felt we had to do something."

Karen and her husband, Mark Joseph, founded Food For Neighbors to address teen hunger at schools just like those in Herndon, where many students had few reliable food sources other than their weekday school breakfasts and lunches. While various programs had recently begun to address this concern at the elementary school level, they were too limited to address the large middle and high school populations.

In 2016, Food For Neighbors began filling this gap via its "Red Bag" program, which allows individuals to shop for non-perishable items at their convenience and



Food For Neighbors volunteers brave the cold to collect food.

PHOTO BY RENEE MAXWELL

to set them on their doorsteps for collection approximately five times per year. Volunteers organized by neighborhoods then collect the food and bring it to a central location, where it is sorted and then delivered to participating schools. At the schools, volunteers package the food, and social workers and parent liaisons distribute the packages to students on a weekly basis.

School counselors and social workers, who are at the heart of the program at the school level, continue to note the positive impact that Food For Neighbors is having on their students.

"The other amazing component of this program is that this might be the very reason—food assistance—that keeps them coming to school and not being a dropout," explains Florence "Pipi" Harrison of Bryant High School. "It opens doors to other conversations and resources that we can provide. Once again, it's not just a bag of food. It's keeping the connection to our school and help."

KAREN JOSEPH thanks the many school counselors and social workers for making a difference in the lives of their students as well as the "Red Bag" program participants, drivers, sorters, and deliverers for making Food For Neighbors possible. She also thanks Herndon community partners, Great Harvest Bread Company and Sprouts Farmers Market, and the many other organizations that have provided financial donations.

These include Trinity Presbyterian Church, First Baptist Church of Herndon, Fairfax Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Town Center Family Medicine, Giant Food, MOD Pizza, Brandywine Realty Trust, Elden Street Tea Shop, Touchstone Crystal, Herndon Cheer, Herndon Navy Junior ROTC, and Hornets Lacrosse. She encourages community members to donate food via the "Red Bag" program and/or to provide other assistance by visiting <https://www.foodforneighbors.org/get-involved/>.

Serving Up BBQ and Patriotism

MISSION BBQ opens in Herndon.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

MISSION BBQ opened a new location in Herndon, at noon, Monday, Dec. 16. Co-founder Bill Kraus hosted the Grand Opening celebration for the fast-casual restaurant located at 2403B Centreville Road. A crowd of nearly 70 people, including local dignitaries, law enforcement and fire and rescue personnel, veterans, active-duty military and the public, attended the event. Retired Navy radar operator Sigmond Alman of Oakton, who served on the USS Monterey during World War II and retired Air Force Colonel Robert A. Shawn, took part in the ribbon-cutting ceremony



As Fairfax County Police Lt. Tim Field, McLean District Station, sings the national anthem of the United States at the ribbon-cutting for MISSION BBQ in Herndon, co-founder of the fast-food restaurant chain, Bill Kraus (right) and General Manager, Adam Faggio (left) stand with hands over their hearts.

and served as guests of honor.

According to opening tradition, Kraus stood outside on top of "Bam Bam," MISSION BBQ's big mobile barbeque assist machine, and addressed the crowd. "Wanting to build a business that had purpose, had meaning, had signifi-

cance, we opened our first MISSION BBQ in Glen Burnie, Md., on Sept. 11, 2011, and damn right, we did that intentionally. Intentionally that ten years after this world changed as we all knew it, in some small way, we're going to try to change it back. We are go-

ing to remind people how fortunate we are to live in this amazing country. What makes this country so great are our heroes. How do we define a hero at MISSION BBQ? It's anybody who will stand in a line and raise their right hand and swear to protect, serve, and save. You can do it in your community or if you put on the cloth of our nation and fight to keep us free and to keep us safe," said Kraus. Patriotism is the core of MISSION BBQ, according to Kraus. Every day at noon, staff and patrons stop what they are doing and in a show of respect sing the national anthem, hats removed and hand over hearts. Opening day was no different with a salute to the Stars and Stripes. The ceremony kicked off with "The Star-Spangled Banner" performed live by Fairfax County Police Lieutenant Tim Field, McLean District Station, "a local uniformed American hero," said Kraus. The ribbon-cutting ceremony followed immediately afterward with Shawn doing the honors and Alman beside.

Then everyone went inside and enjoyed authentic BBQ served in a dining room filled with tributes to those who make the United States great.

According to Kraus, as a former Under Armour, Incorporated marketing executive with 25 years experience, he and Steve Newton, a restaurant industry veteran with 20 years experience at Outback Steakhouse, co-founded and opened the doors to their first Mission BBQ believing there was "nothing more American than BBQ." They also believed, he said that there was nobody more American than the brave men and women who swear to protect and serve communities and country. Looking around the dining room filled with military, police, firefighters and first responders chowing down on BBQ and sides, Kraus said, "What is never lost on me is that we get the easy job. We just get to serve food and say thanks to our heroes."

Shaping an Optimal Future

Herndon Children place 3rd at *FIRST* LEGO League Virginia + D.C. Championships.

By MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

A team of five friends ages 10-11 who attend Floris Elementary School in Herndon walked away with the 3rd Place Championship trophy at the *FIRST* LEGO League, Virginia + Washington D.C. Competition. The event was held at James Madison University in Harrisonburg in early December. "A total of 500+ teams from across the state competed at the regional level to qualify for the state-level competition. A total of 109 teams then competed at the state level," said adult coach Janhavi Rajagopal.

During the multi-month season, Arjun Krishnamurthy, Varenia Immidiseti, Srinika Kallem, Sanya Bhalla and Ayush Tripathy researched a real-world engineering challenge, developed a solution and designed related LEGO-based robots. Calling themselves Team Curiobots, the students, guided by their adult coaches, took on the CITY SHAPER Challenge, a phrase coined by the *FIRST* LEGO League. "Our cities and towns face big issues, like transportation, accessibility and even natural disasters. How can we shape a better future for everyone? It will take teamwork and imagination. Are you ready to build a better tomorrow together," asked organizers on the nonprofit's website va-dcfl.org.

TEAM CURIOBOTS prepared for judging in four areas, Robot Game, Robot Design, Project and the *FIRST* Core Values. "They judge you on how well you work as a team," Kallem said, referencing the fundamental competition difference, which distinguished *FIRST* LEGO League from other championships of its kind, the incorporation and judging of Core Values.

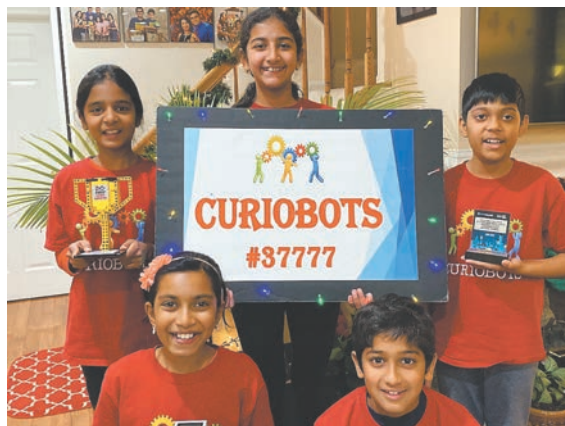
Tripathy said: "I learned so much.

Member Arjun Krishnamurthy said he and fellow teammates "learned how to program and run an Ev3 robot...and (learned) engineering skills in a fun and sporty atmosphere." Using LEGO MINDSTORM technology, Team Curiobots designed, programmed and tested their robot game model using the LEGO building bricks combined with the real-life robotic technology, elements with touch, color and infrared sensors. The model was supposed to represent the team's Innovation Project.

"Every year, they design a mat that is based on the topic (the challenge) of the year. There are usually fourteen missions ...each has a number of points...At the tournament, they gave (us) two and a half minutes to do as many missions as we could," said Kallem. "We knew Robot was our weak spot," said Tripathy. "We adapted other things teams had done like programs, Master loop and PID (Proportional-Integral-Derivative controller) ... We only wanted to improve," he said.

As for the Curiobots' Innovation Project, according to Bhalla, this segment of the competition allowed the team to "think outside of the box and solve innovative real-life problems. ... We felt like future engineers as we raised awareness for promoting energy-efficient Data Centers," she said.

The team identified **Data Centers** as their project



From bottom to top, left to right, Varenia Immidiseti, Arjun Krishnamurthy, Srinika Kallem, Sanya Bhalla, Ayush Tripathy.

to explore because, as Kallem and other teammates traveled to classes and appointments near their homes in Northern Virginia, they noticed the massive buildings. "We always see a bunch of Data Centers... We didn't know what they were, so we ... researched it," Kallem said.

"This season, we met many experts to help us complete our Innovation Project," said Bhalla. She named specialists at the Department of Energy, Greenspace and Amazon AWS: Manassas Data Center. "We got a boatload of information doing the project," said Immidiseti. Bhalla said that the team discussed the implementation considerations of their solution with a civil engineer and program manager. "We got a great insight into the cost of building a data center underground and in an existing bunker," Bhalla said.

Next, the team pitched their solution to a senior campaigner at Greenspace. The team gained additional insight, but this time regarding the lack of government support to invest in clean energy in Virginia, according to Bhalla.

"Dominion Energy is a utility company that supplies electricity to all data centers in this area (and) uses non-renewable sources such as coal to power the Data Center. This needs to change," said Kallem, who added the team planned to raise the needed change to their State Senator.

Team Curiobot's plan was three-fold, beginning with "Bring the Change," spreading awareness about the problem through the distribution of flyers at local sites, according to Immidiseti. The second part of the team's solution was to recover the heat produced from the servers. "When the servers get hot, the hot air just gets lost," Bhalla said.

THE TEAM proposed to reuse the waste heat, "to put water and oil inside of the CRAC units (computer room air conditioning devices), which are basically huge A.C. units for the data center and use that recovered heat in nearby buildings," said Immidiseti. According to Kallem and Bhalla, while the second part of the team's solution coupled existing data centers with other facilities that have high heat demand, the team urged investing in clean, renewable energy. "For existing data centers, we are proposing to put solar panels and windmills on the roof. This will supplement the electricity that the data center pulls from the grid. The heat will be reused. For new data centers, we are proposing to put them underground. On top, there will be a mixed space with pools, offices, restaurants and more," said Kallem. Bhalla added: "We are proposing to build data centers underground, so they would not be eyesores. The heat from the servers would go through pipes that heat the buildings above the data centers."

MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Lisa Merkel is the first woman elected to serve as Herndon's Mayor

Mayor Merkel Won't Seek a Fifth Term

After a decade of service, Herndon Mayor Lisa Merkel, announced on Jan. 2 that she would not seek re-election in 2020. First serving as Vice-Mayor from 2010-2012, then as Mayor since 2012, Merkel will step down at the conclusion of her term.

Eight years after moving to Herndon and choosing to raise her family there, Merkel decided to run for Town Council in 2010. At the time, Herndon had been in the national news over day labor and immigration issues. Merkel was concerned that those issues dominated town politics and wanted to shift the conversation towards the future Metro Station and Downtown development. She won her first race for Mayor by 38 votes in a contested three-way race, becoming the first woman elected to serve as Herndon's Mayor. Since that first election, Merkel has won three additional elections by increasing margins and was unopposed in 2018.

Throughout her tenure, Merkel has remained passionate about maintaining Herndon's small town character while capitalizing on the opportunities being in the Dulles Technology Corridor affords the Town.

Under her leadership the Herndon Metro Station area was rezoned for transit-oriented development and the first development plan was approved by the Town Council. Additionally, the town created a downtown master plan, and ultimately entered into a comprehensive agreement with Comstock Partners to build the long-awaited downtown project. Construction is set to begin in 2020.

Merkel released a video high-



During her tenure, Mayor Merkel focused on the future Metro Station and Downtown development while maintaining Herndon's small town character.

lighting the town's progress during her tenure and thanking the residents of Herndon for making her job the best of any Mayor's, anywhere.

Merkel holds a bachelor's degree in Education from Auburn University and a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Virginia Tech. She was formerly an elementary school teacher, reading specialist and staff developer with Fairfax County Public Schools and currently represents the town on the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, serves as the Town Section Chair on the Virginia Municipal League Executive Board and is a member of the Herndon Historical Society, and the Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce. Lisa and her husband, Dave, are raising their family in a circa 1895 farmhouse in Herndon's historic downtown.

OPINION

Strength Through Struggle

The heroic story of an ALS stricken rabbi.

BY RABBI LEIBEL FAJNLAND
DIRECTOR CHABAD OF RESTON - HERNDON

Google Dina Hurwitz. You may find a video of a poised, articulate, lovely woman speaking before thousands of fellow Chabad emissaries at their convention in 2016, or before an attentive crowd at a lecture somewhere across the USA. “She’s got it all together,” you may think.

But behind that smooth facade lies an honest, fragile, deep and strong woman warrior. A woman who is facing an excruciating challenge with candor and courageous faith—a challenge that has changed her family’s lives in unimaginable ways.

Dina was a typical Chassidic girl. Fun, pretty, and well-versed in Torah. Born in Nashville, Tennessee, she was raised in California. At 14, she went to the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn, N.Y., to visit family. Her cousin’s best friend was a young man named Yitzi Hurwitz. “I never met anyone with so much joy and excitement. He literally danced when he walked. In the end, that’s who I’m going to marry,” she told her mother.

Dina and Yitzi did marry in 1996, when she was 21 years old. She was sure that no one else could possibly have such a deep love. Their delight and happiness shines from pictures of the two.

The young couple moved across the country to start a Chabad center in Temecula, Calif., a small community about 100 miles from Los Angeles. “Yitzi’s life dream was to be a foot soldier of the Lubavitcher Rebbe and show people how beautiful it is to be Jewish,” explains Dina. A hands-on father, he adored their growing family. Life progressed, filled with the normal demands of work, travel, community, family.

In 2012, everything changed.

Yitzi started complaining, “Something’s not right with my mouth,” he said. Friends joked about the non-drinking rabbi who had slurred speech, sounding drunk. Six months of testing led to a devastating diagnosis: bulbar onset ALS, the most aggressive type of this neuromuscular disorder more commonly known as Lou Gehrig’s disease. Communication between the brain and muscles fails to work properly, and the muscles slowly atrophy and die. At first, Yitzi’s speech was affected, with some diminishment on his left side, but many normal activities were still possible. He was able to communicate through a text-to-voice app. But the disease forged mercilessly ahead.

Dina helplessly watched “this outgoing musician, storyteller, dancer, rabbi and great communicator, who could talk to anyone in the world,” lose all those abilities over the period of a year-and-a-half.

Today, Rabbi Yitzi is bedridden and mostly paralyzed. A tracheotomy has extended his life well beyond the expected two-year duration. After nearly five years, this dancing, singing



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Even with unimaginable limitations, rabbi Yitzi expresses intense love and optimism, and deeply touches many lives.

beacon of life is more than 95 percent immobile, except for two things: He can smile, and he can move his very expressive eyeballs. Period.

Many would be tempted to wallow in self-pity or anger. But the couple has heroically risen to the challenge. Even with these unimaginable limitations, Yitzi expresses intense love and optimism, and deeply touches many lives, combining the latest technology and his iron-clad determination to find whatever way possible to give and spread happiness. He shares his indomitable spirit by laboriously writing a blog with the movement of his eyes, focusing on each letter with a Tobii gaze-activated keyboard; a daylong, exhausting task. This weekly blog has thousands of followers around the world.

And as for Dina? At first it was about sheer survival (mental, physical and logistical): raising their seven children, dealing with ongoing complex medical issues, finances and countless other demands, without collapsing or marinating in bitterness. But this enormous challenge has grown, and grown her, into more.

She has cried. And mourned. And been bitter. And coped. And laughed. And loved. And learned.

She shares her insights, frustrations, faith and compassion freely. A small family blog, “The Caffeinated Thinker,” started before Yitzi’s illness has grown into an honest and

Details

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empathetic source of strength for thousands of readers. Dina shares her path, how she learned to differentiate between pain and suffering, and how a woman who was “completely paranoid about public speaking” realized that she had vital life lessons to share. She now speaks about her story in many venues around the world with humor, poignancy, a few tears and, most importantly, gritty, real-life inspiration that every member of the audience can take home and apply to their challenges, big or small.

We invite you to join us as we welcome Mrs. Dina Hurwitz to Reston this Sunday evening, Jan. 12, where she will present a powerful lecture open to the entire community titled “STRENGTH THROUGH STRUGGLE”.

We all go through challenges in life. Is there a way to thrive, not only in spite of them, but as a result of them? Mrs. Dina Hurwitz has an AMAZING story to tell, one you will find very inspiring.

Proceeds to benefit ALS research.

Write

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

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Alexandria VA 22314
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WELLBEING

Giving up alcohol during “Dry January” can have positive health benefits.

PHOTO BY
MARILYN CAMPBELL



Dry January?

The benefits of and strategies for taking a month-long booze break.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

After a season filled with Champagne, Whiskey Sours, Gingerbread Martinis and other libations, some might need a break from booze. Dry January, a public health campaign that encourages giving up alcohol until the first of February – can help with that effort. The health benefits of staying dry for a month range from thinner thighs to a fatter wallet.

“It’s very common for people to come home after a stressful day and unwind with a glass of wine or two,” said Alexandria-based substance abuse counselor Sarah Brewer, Ph.D. “But the reality is that while alcohol does seem to make you more relaxed at first, it can lead to anxiety or a depressed mood.”

Weight loss can be a pleasant side effect of abstaining from an evening pour, says nutritionist Kathryn Armstrong, who cites a report by the National Institutes of Health that showed a strong link between weight gain and alcohol. “Basically, the cocktail or wine that you’re drinking has empty calories,” she said. “Also, many people tend to eat, especially junk food when they drink.”

“Another benefit of being alcohol-free for a month is that people often find that they don’t need that glass of wine to relax and unwind from a stressful day,” added Brewer. “Giving up alcohol for a month might give you an opportunity to find explore other relaxation methods like meditation or going for a walk or some other type of exercise.”

“By not drinking you might find that you’ve been using alcohol to help deal with other issues like depression, PTSD or anxiety. In those cases you should get help from a medical or mental health professional.”

— Sarah Brewer, Ph.D.

For those who regularly attend happy hours with friends or have a glass of wine to relax, abstaining during one of the longest months of the year might seem unpleasant or unappealing, says Bethesda-based therapist Carol Barnaby, LCSW. “You might find things to distract you,” she said. “If you’re used to having a drink or going to a happy hour at the same time every day, you can schedule something else during that time so you’re mind isn’t on alcohol. People who enjoy the taste of alcohol might try eating fruit or drinking a fruit flavored sparkling water.”

“If you’re used to having a drink or going to a happy hour at the same time every day, you can schedule something else during that time so you’re mind isn’t on alcohol.”

— Carol Barnaby, LCSW

Attempting to take a break from alcohol might unmask deeper issues, suggests Brewer.

“If you find that you can’t stop drinking, it could mean that you have a problem with alcohol consumption,” she said. “By not drinking you might find that you’ve been using alcohol to help deal with other issues like depression, PTSD or anxiety. In those cases you should get help from a medical or mental health professional.”

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Obituary

Obituary

NANCY ELLEN KIDWELL

September 20, 1961 – December 11, 2019

Nancy was born in Kansas City North, Kansas City, MO to Maryellen (McKelvey) Bashoum and Douglas L. Bashoum. In 1963 the family moved to Plainview, Long Island, NY and in 1972 moved to Reston, VA. Nancy graduated from Herndon High School in 1979. She married Ronald Leigh Kidwell of Vienna, VA and they settled in Orange, VA.

Nancy had three great loves in life--her children; her animals, especially wolves--she spent many years raising and caring for wolf mixes; and teaching disabled children in the Orange school system as a substitute teacher and aide.

Nancy is preceded in death by her father, Douglas L. Bashoum; aunt, Patricia M. Pugh; and sister, Lea-Anne Bashoum. She is survived by her estranged husband, Ronald L. Kidwell, and their children Lucas Kidwell (Esmerelda) of Louisa, VA; Shenoah Kidwell of Orange, VA; Morgan Kidwell of Glen Allen, VA; and Dylan Kidwell of Madison, VA; her mother, Maryellen Bashoum of Ashburn, VA; her brothers Christopher D. Bashoum (Leslie) of Purcellville, VA; Michael E. Bashoum (Jennilynne) of Sterling, VA; and Jonathan A. Bashoum of Glenn Allen, VA; her aunt, Joy Cary of Richmond, VA; her great-aunt, Kay McCormack of Edison, NJ; and beloved grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and grand nieces and nephews.

Nancy's family and friends will miss her beautiful smile, her warmth, her generous spirit, and her very caring and loving heart.

Mass will be held at St. Isadore the Farmer Catholic Church in Orange, VA at noon on January 11. A reception at the church will follow after the Mass.

In lieu of flowers donations can be made to the American Stroke Association at stroke.org or the Wolf Conservation Center in South Salem, NY at www.nywolf.org.

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VIEWPOINTS

Herndon residents, Councilmembers reflect on Mayor Lisa C. Merkel's decision not to seek 5th term.

BY MERCIA HOBSON



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Teri Cochrane - Town resident since 2017: I don't know anything about the politics in this town, but it has a beating heart. I attended a town council meeting to honor Green Lizard Cycling. I thought the session was well structured with Robert's Rules (of Order) procedures. My philosophy is to gather information on how to make things better and not criticize.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON

Jeff Mann - Town resident: I really appreciate her leadership. I do know that what we talked about ten years ago is different than what we are talking about now. If we are going to do something with the Downtown Redevelopment Project, let's start it. If we're not, let's drop it.

Herndon Town Councilmember Signe V. Friedrichs

- Town resident for 24 years: I am so grateful to Mayor Merkel for all she has done to move this town toward an inclusive, hopeful and vibrant future. Her task was not easy. I will miss her on Council, and I know she will go on to do even more wonderful things. I wish her the best. Friedrichs announced she would not seek re-election as a Herndon Town Councilmember in the Nov. 3, 2020 election due to family responsibilities.



COURTESY TOWN OF HERNDON

Herndon Vice Mayor Sheila A. Olem

- Town resident for 30 years: The current Mayor and I were both elected in 2010, so I know Mayor Merkel will cherish spending more time with her family and attending her children's events without the guilt of missing a town event... You never get that time back as a parent. Olem announced she would seek election as Herndon Mayor in the Nov. 3, 2020 election.



COURTESY TOWN OF HERNDON



PHOTO VIA FACEBOOK

Former Herndon Town Councilmember Jasbinder Singh - Town resident 30 years: Mayor Merkel's legacy can be summarized as follows: Giveaway of the Downtown Land: If, as expected, the downtown development contract is executed, the developer will essentially get the land for free. The Town will leave about \$12 million on the table. Gross Lack of Transparency: Two facts speak volumes. On July 1, 2012, the very first day of Merkel's first term, the town changed the format of the Minutes of (Council) Meetings to render them feckless. None of the documents related to the downtown development have been made public under one pretext or another.

Herndon Town Councilmember Pradip Dhakal



Town resident for 8 years--We, thank Mayor Merkel for her service and leadership in the town. She is very easy to work with; she was always on top of agendas and very caring about the town and the residents. We will miss her and wish her a very happy time with her family. Dhakal announced he would seek re-election as a Herndon Town Councilmember in the Nov. 3, 2020 election.

Herndon Town Councilmember William J. (Bill) McKenna



COURTESY TOWN OF HERNDON

- Town resident since 2012: I have heard from a lot of people about Lisa not running for re-election, and they are sad about it and rightfully so. Although I am not on social media, I have heard that the message boards were blowing up. I think that alone is a testament to her stewardship and leadership of the town by the response. I am grateful to the Mayor for all of her service over the years and look forward to continuing to work with her for the balance of the term. McKenna announced he was not focused on campaigning or elections, but on working diligently for the town as they enter the budget season.

BULLETIN

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

FRIDAY/JAN. 10

Reston Chamber Open House. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce, 1886 Metro Center Drive, Suite 150, Reston. Stop by to see the new space; they will be serving cake and light refreshments, and have a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 11:30 a.m.

Commemorative Brick Program.

The Reston Historic Trust & Museum will be celebrating its commemorative brick program. Members of the community are encouraged to support not only the Reston Historic Trust & Museum on Giving Tuesday – but to do so by ordering a commemorative brick which is a great way to leave your mark on Reston or give as a gift to friends, family, teachers, neighbors, organizations, or even a pet. Commemorative bricks can be ordered at <https://www.restonmuseum.org/bricks>. The bricks are ordered only once a year. Bricks to be installed in 2020 must be ordered by Jan. 8, 2020. Bricks are then reviewed by the Lake Anne Condominium Association and Reston Historic Trust & Museum. They are displayed and dedicated on Founder's Day, which will be April 18, 2020 and installed shortly thereafter dependent on weather.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have received training and are qualified to offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthymindsfairfax or www.nam-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

ONGOING

STEM Professionals Needed. Volunteers are needed to assist K-12 STEM teachers in northern Virginia as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's STEM Volunteer Program, stemvolunteers.org, during the 2019-20 school year. Contact Don Rea at 571-551-2488 or donaaldea@aol.com.

Assistance League of Northern Virginia, a volunteer nonprofit, invites community members to join the organization to participate in its Reading Express program. Volunteers provide one-on-one tutoring to first grade students during the school year.

To learn more contact VP Membership Mary Gronlund at gronbiz@aol.com or Program Coordinator Lynn Barron at lynnieb517@verizon.net.

Volunteer Adult Mentors Needed. Help assist the Department of Family Services' BeFriendA-Child mentoring program. The mentors provide opportunities for companionship, guidance and support to children who have been abused and neglected, or who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Contact Ibrahim Khalil at Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-4547.

Herndon High School Library needs volunteers. Training available to help with re-shelving books, pulling books for teacher use, helping to check passes, or other special projects. To learn more, email hhs_library@fcps.edu.

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit www.rsvpnova.org.

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OMG



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Are you sitting down? I wasn't when I got the call from my oncologist after hours this past Thursday. He was calling me with the results from the previous week's biopsy. He said he had "exciting news." He said the biopsy was not only "typed" (genetic mutation/biomarker) but, as he continued to bury the lead using medical jargon about the slide and stain, finally got around to it: I may not have (or have had, still to be discussed/possibly determined) non-small cell lung cancer, stage IV. Instead, I may have (always had) thyroid cancer, specifically, papillary thyroid cancer, referred to as "the friendly cancer," by my oncology nurse the following infusion when I shared with her these preliminary findings. 'Friendly' referring to one's survival/life expectancy after diagnosis.

Moving forward to begin/confirm this new working diagnosis, I had an ultrasound of my thyroid the next day and Friday the following week, Team Lourie will be meeting with an endocrinologist. She (I saw her picture on the wall outside her office) presumably will have had a discussion, or at the very least, received an email/referral from my oncologist citing chapter and a few verses about who I am, how I've been treated, what scan/results I've had and of course, the news of this most recent biopsy, explaining why he reached out. I really don't expect, given my oncologist's excitement, and the fact that he called me (only the second time in nearly 11 years) that the endocrinologist will be likewise informed and possibly even excited to share a similar diagnosis with a previously-characterized as "terminal" patient who (yours truly) might not be "terminal" after all. 'Might not' being the operative phrase I'm still having difficulty grasping.

Somehow, I have to slow my roll and pull back on the reins. We're still early days here. Right now, I don't know anything definitive, so I'm not quite ready to call this a "Festivus miracle." Though at present it all sounds fairly promising, it's not exactly cast in stone, and neither has a revised Thyroid-cancer-treatment plan been put in place. I'm still a lung cancer "diagnossee" and one still waiting for the other shoe to drop. Therefore, until I'm told otherwise, as of now, I'm scheduled for my bi-weekly opdivo immunotherapy infusion on Jan. 3, 2020.

Now, why all of this is worth writing about, prematurely as it is, is that oncologists, almost by definition, are typically not the bearer of "exciting news." Generally speaking, they are giving bad news and saying it very directly at that. As was said to me in late February 2009: "Why not take that vacation you've always dreamed of while you're still feeling good?" The implication being quite clear that it's likely to get worse from here. To receive a call like I did Thursday from my oncologist now implying that it might get better from here is completely out of the ordinary. Moreover, if he initiated such a communication, I should probably take him at his words and take him very seriously.

Right now, I am possibly elated to be over the moon. However, it's not as if I've been given a clean bill of health. Cleaner, yes, but one still with a significant balance. And until I look the endocrinologist in her stethoscope and hear some magic words, I am keeping my powder dry and not shouting off my mouth - too much.

Cancer is a funny business. There are twists and turns and unexpected results, much of it not controlled by the doctors. And though I may be on the precipice of being blessed with some amazing, life-altering news, this time for the unbelievably good, I am still a week, maybe even weeks away from knowing with any certainty. In the interim, however, I am certain of one thing. If this change in my status does occur and I'm given back my life expectancy, somehow, I will try and return the favor.

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

CALENDAR

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

ONGOING

NOW THROUGH FEB. 2

”The Mountaintop.” At NextStop Theatre, 269 Sunset Park Drive, Herndon. “The Mountaintop” is a historical drama taking place in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s hotel room the night before his assassination. He meets a young maid who forces him to consider exactly who and what he is fighting for. Full of vivid theatricality, poetic language, and surprising twists, this drama takes us to the summit of a man’s historic life and offers a stunning view of his dream for our nation. Visit the website: www.nextstoptheatre.org/shows/mountaintop

FRIDAY/JAN. 10

Baby & Me Yoga. 10:30 a.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Bring your baby for a nurturing yoga workshop designed for the two of you. No experience needed. Bring a mat or blanket. Cosponsored FRRL. Age 6 weeks—16 months with adult. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

SATURDAY/JAN. 11

Sing! Books with Miss Emily. 10:30 a.m. At 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Join Miss Emily for singing storytime with illustrated songs. Cosponsored by the FRRL. Age 2-5 with adult. No registration required. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

SUNDAY/JAN. 12

Sunday Funday. 1-4 p.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Drop by the Children’s desk on any Sunday for a fun independent activity. Perhaps you will create a flannel board, or play Book Bingo, or explore the library with a scavenger hunt. We will have a new activity each month. Age 5-11. No registration required. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

Michael Cleveland & Flame Keeper. 7 p.m. At Bluegrass Barn at Frying Pan Farm Park, 2739 West Ox Road, Herndon. Put some toe-tapping fun into your gift-giving this holiday season by treating friends and family to a musical performance at Bluegrass Barn at Frying Pan Farm Park. Cost is \$18/advance; \$20/door. New this season is the Half Season Pass — four shows and reserved seats for \$68. Food and drinks, including beer and wine, are available for purchase at the performances. Tickets can be purchased online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/frying-pan-park/ or by phone at 703-222-4664 or 703-437-9101.

MONDAY/JAN. 13

Baby Lapsit. 10:30 a.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Enjoy nursery rhymes and songs while building early literacy skills for your child. Age Birth to 11 months with adult. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

Preschool Storytime — Fairy Tales. 2 p.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. This month we will foster your little one’s love of reading with stories, songs, and crafts focused on our favorite classic fairy tales! Age 3-5 with adult. NO Registration required. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

TUESDAY/JAN. 14

Baby Play and Explore. 11 a.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Join in an hour of unstructured play and social time for babies. Cosponsored by Friends of the Reston Regional Library. Age birth-18 months with adult. No registration required. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

Read to the Dog. 7 p.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Read aloud to a trained therapy dog. Bring your own book or choose one from the Library. First come, first served - one 15 minute session per child. Age 5-11. No registration required. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 15

Vivid, Poetic Play About Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

PHOTOS COURTESY NEXTSTOP THEATRE

NextStop’s upcoming production of ‘The Mountaintop.’

BY DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

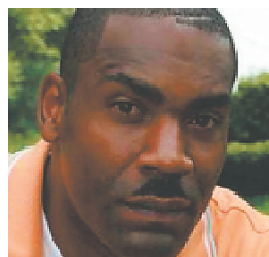
A rainy night on April 3, 1968 in Memphis, Tenn. It was not long after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had delivered a powerful speech in support of striking sanitation workers in Memphis. King had implored his listeners to work together; to take “a stand with greater determination ... to make American a better nation.”

As he finished his speech, King spoke of seeing the Promised-Land from the mountaintop; then speculated about his future. Would he see the Promised Land? What might have happen after he delivered his speech, then retired for the night. That’s the focus of “The Mountaintop” NextStop’s upcoming theatrical production.

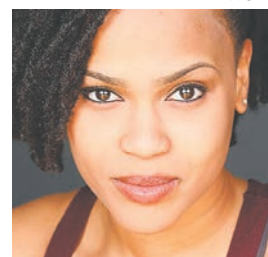
Written by award winning playwright Katori Hall, “The Mountaintop” envisions what could have happened when a mystifying stranger meets Dr. King bringing unanticipated weighty news.

“This is a moving and beautiful play that gets to the heart of Dr. King’s dream for a better America,” said Evan Hoffmann, producing artistic director, NextStop Theatre. “We have gathered an exceptional group of artists to guide this story onto the stage. I could not be more excited to share this work with our audiences.”

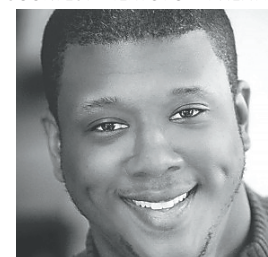
“The Mountaintop” is directed by Kevin



Curtis McNeil featured in NextStop Theatre’s production of ‘The Mountaintop’ running Jan. 9 to Feb 2, 2020.



Shayla Simmons featured in NextStop Theatre’s production of ‘The Mountaintop’ running Jan. 9 to Feb 2, 2020.



Kevin S. McAllister is directing the NextStop Theatre production of ‘The Mountaintop’ running Jan. 9 to Feb 2, 2020.

Where and When

NextStop Theatre presents “The Mountaintop” at 269 Sunset Park Drive, (Inside Sunset Business Park), Herndon. Performances: Jan. 9 to Feb. 2, 2020. Thurs. Jan 9, 23, and 30 at 8 p.m., Fri. Jan 17, 24, and 31 at 8 p.m., Sat. Jan 11 and 25 at 8 p.m. Jan. 18 and Feb. 1 at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., Sun Jan. 12, 19, Jan. 26 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. and Feb. 2 at 2 p.m. Special performance on Dr. Martin Luther King Day, Monday, Jan. 20 at 8 p.m. Tickets: General Admission* \$35-50* (NextStop strongly encourages booking in advance. Ticket prices increase as performances get nearer and fill up). Tickets call: 866-811-4111 or visit www.nextstoptheatre.org.

S. McAllister. “He is one of the most sought after artists in the area,” noted Hoffmann. “McAllister has been a member of the Broadway cast of ‘Come From Away.’” He has also received several Helen Hayes Awards.

NextStop’s “The Mountaintop” stars Curtis McNeil as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Shayla Simmons is Camae; the fictional character who may not be what she first seems. What happens between Dr. King and Camae becomes an encounter with unforeseen twists of fate that spill over in a startling, mysterious manner

To bring audiences closer to the actors, NextStop is reconfiguring its theatrical space to make the experience even more intimate.

“We will be donating twenty of the closest seats to each performance to local high school students, so that they can have a front row to history,” said Hoffmann. It is the “Front Row to History” Initiative, which will provide free, front-row tickets for local high school students to see “The Mountaintop.”

“It is my hope that this unique opportunity will open new doors and perspectives for the students who participate, and foster a greater dialogue between the performers and the audience,” said Hoffmann. “‘The Mountaintop’ is an extraordinary play providing an up-close and personal look at a famous, iconic civil rights leader.”

Teddy Bear Tea Party. 2-4 p.m. At Herndon Community Center, 730 Elden Street, Herndon. Bring your favorite teddy bear or stuffed friend, dress in your tea time best, and enjoy tea, treats, stories, and a special craft. Cost is \$18 per child/adult couple; \$10 per add’l person. Pre-registration required. Visit the website: <https://www.herndon-va.gov/recreation/special-events/teddy-bear-tea-party>.

THURSDAY/JAN. 16

Toddler Storytime — I Want My Hat Back! 10:30 a.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Join in this enchanting tale by Jon Klassen. If you have a special hat, wear it for our storytime. Age 2 with adult. No registration required. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

Magic Tree House Book Club. 4:30 p.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Read to discuss: Winter of the Ice Wizard by M.P. Osborne. Copies available at the Children’s Desk. Grade 3-4. No registration required. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

FRIDAY/JAN. 17

Gymboree Music. 10:30 a.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Discover melody pitch and rhythm while building a repertoire of joyful songs. Cosponsored by FRRL. Age 6-18 months with adult. Please register. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

Gymboree Music II. 11:15 a.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Dance and sing to a new musical style

each month, including Latin, Rock ‘n’ Roll and Classical. Cosponsored by FRRL. Age 18-24 months with adult. Please register. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

JAN. 17-26

Joshua’s Hands Quilting Event. Location TBA in Purcellville. Joshua’s Hands is a non-profit in Loudoun County that hosts free quilting events to support wounded servicepeople. Joshua’s Hands will host 10 days of quilting fun to make handmade quilts for servicemen and women wounded while serving our country. All are welcome. No sewing experience or registration needed. All materials are provided but donations are appreciated. Come for an hour or the day. Monday-Saturdays 9 a.m.-9 p.m.; Sundays 1-9 p.m. Purcellville. Check website for exact location. Info@JoshuasHands.org, or call 540-454-7827, or visit www.JoshuasHands.org.

JAN. 17 TO FEB. 1

Ken Ludwig’s “The Game’s Afoot.” 8 p.m. At Reston Community’s CenterStage, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. The Reston Community Players presents this murder-mystery comedy featuring real-life 1930s Broadway star William Gillette, admired the world over for playing Sherlock Holmes. Mystery and hilarity in equal parts ensue in this murderously funny whodunit production that will keep you guessing until the final curtain. Tickets: \$28/adult, \$24/seniors and students. Performance Dates: Jan. 17, 18, 24, 25, 26, 30, Feb. 1. Tickets at www.restonplayers.org.

SATURDAY/JAN. 18

Reston Festival: Lunar New Year. 1 p.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Celebrate Lunar New Year with the library and the Northern Virginia Experimental Chinese School. Festivities for all ages will include crafts, games, and performances. All Ages. No registration required. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

MLK Tribute. 4-5:30 p.m. At Reston Community Center Hunters Woods, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. Celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. through Negro Spirituals performed by Jasmine Marshall Lizama, Bryan Jackson, and Beverly Cosham. Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech performed by students from Al Fatih Academy. Free admission. Visit the website: <http://www.restoncommunityorchestra.org>

Curator’s Talk and Opening Reception. 4-6 p.m. At Greater Reston Arts Center. For the exhibit Moira Dryer: Yours for the Taking, which runs Jan. 18–April 18. Artist Moira Dryer (b. 1957, Toronto, Ontario; d. 1992, New York, NY) in conjunction with the major exhibition of Dryer’s early work at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., entitled Moira Dryer: Back in Business.

Country-Western Dance. At Galilee United Methodist Church, 45425 Winding Road, Sterling. The Northern Virginia Country-Western Dance Association will hold a dance. Lessons, 6-7 p.m. Open dancing, 7-9:30 p.m. A DJ provides music. Couples and singles of all ages welcome. Admission for NVCWDA members \$10; non-members \$12; children under 18 accompanied by a paying adult \$5. Trial memberships available at door for member level entry fee. Smoke-free, alcohol-free. BYO refreshments. Visit the website www.nvcwda.org.