

Great Falls CONNECTION

WELLBEING
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Wish List Project Coordinators (from left) Julie Casso, Christie Shumadine, Lissa Perez, and Eleni Gianoplus. By the drop off event, 103 donors signed up to buy gifts and 40 gave nearly \$5000 in gift cards.

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Twenty Years of Giving

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

The spirit of giving is alive in Great Falls. At 10 a.m. on Saturday, Dec. 15, Wish List Project coordinators Christie Shumadine, Lissa Perez and their 19 elves brace themselves for more than a thousand wrapped gifts and gift cards to be delivered over the next four hours.

This year, 357 individuals from seven area shelters and schools are on the Wish List. Donors, called Wish List Angels, choose a person or two or a whole family, for whom to buy, wrap and drop off gifts. When the Wish List is posted in mid-November, word travels fast. This year, a record 25 percent of the slots were matched with donors on day one. By the drop off event, 103 donors signed up to buy gifts and 40 gave nearly \$5000 in gift cards.

Coordination is the key to keeping that many presents organized. At the Perez home drop off, donors drive through and volunteer elves carry the presents from their cars. Gradually, the home, garage and guest house are filled with wrapped wishes. Lists were made and checked more than twice to be sure everyone on the list was complete.

Staff from Artemis House, Katherine Hanley Shelter, Fairfax Foster Teens,



Volunteer elves organize gifts on The Wish List: front to back — Belia Maxwell, Samantha Phillip, Taylor Kelso, Erin Cliff.

Hutchinson and Buzz Aldrin Elementary Schools fill their vans the next day and distribute gifts to recipients. According to decade-long donor Kathy Cooper, "I par-



Local teens unload more than 1,000 gifts from Wish List Angels at the Dec. 15 drive through drop off.

ticipate every year, because I just don't want to see a child go without a Christmas gift."

The generosity is awesome to see, ac-

ording to four 13-year old volunteer elves. They noticed that most individuals got five to seven wrapped gifts from their list and many get more than 10. The middle-schoolers and other elves from Langley, Flint Hill and Thomas Jefferson didn't mind giving up a Saturday to help. To keep the two dozen volunteers going through the day, Deli Italiano and others generously donated food.

The Wish List Project celebrates its 20th year. Ginger Mahon created the initiative in 2000 and continued to lead the project for 15 years. Coordinator Christie Shumadine helped with the project for 18 years and Lissa Perez for 9 years, before they took over in 2015, and put The Wish List online.

Why do these full-time professionals, mothers and youth coaches do it every year?

"I want to be a good role model for my kids, said Christie Shumadine. "It's exhausting, but the kids' enthusiasm motivates me to keep going."

Other drives have been added in recent years - a Spring Break Food Drive, Toiletry Collection, Snack Food Drive and annual Thanksgiving Meal Baskets. See all about this giving group at wishlistangels.org and sign up to help throughout the next year.

Good Year, Good Decade in Home Sales

McLean and Great Falls real estate market year over year comparison 2019 to 2018 to 2009.

BY KAREN BRISCOE

The dawn of a new decade has arrived and 2019 has come to a close. The statistics for 2019 real estate transactions in McLean and Great Falls have been tallied. The numbers are up 7.4 percent year over year, with 1,203 total transactions in 2019 compared to 1,120 the previous year. The even better news is the market is considerably improved over 2009 which came in at only 867. That represents an increase in sales of 38.8 percent over the last decade. The improvement in the market is likely due to several reasons.

Over the past year, interest rates have bounced around, and yet remain at historic lows. As interest rates rise which could happen in 2020, buyer's purchasing power may be affected. On the flip side, there can be a positive market impact too as buyers feel urgency to purchase and lock in their interest rate.

In many price segments, inventory levels are low relative to demand. This is predominately the case in the lower price



points below \$1 million. When there are fewer choices available buyers are faced with several options. In those market dynamics home purchasers often raise their price point, make concessions including housing type, location and upgrades, or put the move on hold.

Some sit on the sidelines to wait for prices to be in line with their purchasing power and others wait for more homes to become available.

Almost every price bracket improved considerably in comparison to the 2018 market. Inside the beltway McLean zip code of 22101 continues to remain the strongest due to the most housing type options and proximity to DC metro center and Amazon HQ2. Outside the beltway, the McLean zip code of 22102 offers both condos in the Tysons market as well as estate style houses on large lots.

Looking forward into 2020 the national elections in November have the potential to impact the real estate market in the Fall. This is particularly the case as Northern Virginia is just across the Potomac River from Washington, DC. Uncertainty in many cases causes buyers and sellers alike to put

moving decisions on hold.

There remain strong indications for sellers that homes priced well and in good condition will sell for solid prices. If demand continues to remain strong relative to supply, some market segments may experience price appreciation.

Home buyers in the area can still purchase with the confidence that buying in an up market cycle frequently proves advanta-

McLean & Great Falls Quarterly Market Analysis of Home Sales (Based on List Price):

2019 compared to 2018 and 2009						
2019 Total Sales: 1,203						
	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
Zip Code						
22101	15	47	140	81	166	45
22102	13	16	51	48	44	258
22066	6	11	76	61	92	33
	Total: 34	Total: 74	Total: 267	Total: 190	Total: 302	Total: 336
	Combined Total Upper Brackets: 375			Combined Total Lower Brackets: 828		
2018 Total Sales: 1,120						
Zip Code	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
22101	21	46	141	68	163	61
22102	10	14	40	34	52	248
22066	1	6	60	45	76	34
	Total: 32	Total: 66	Total: 241	Total: 147	Total: 291	Total: 343
	Combined Total Upper Brackets: 339			Combined Total Lower Brackets: 781		
2009 Total Sales: 867						
Zip Code	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
22101	1	23	55	41	100	179
22102	7	8	22	16	31	206
22066	2	13	35	30	52	46
	Total: 10	Total: 44	Total: 112	Total: 87	Total: 183	Total: 431
	Combined Total Upper Brackets: 166			Combined Total Lower Brackets: 701		

geous over time. Now is the time to work with a professional agent to be in your new home in 2020!

Karen Briscoe with HBC Group at Keller Williams is an active and experienced Realtor® in the Northern Virginia marketplace. Briscoe, alongside her business partner Lizzy Conroy and team, works with sellers, buyers, investors and builders in all price ranges. www.HBCGroupKW.com, 703-734-0192, Homes@HBCGroupKW.com.

OPINION

Promises Kept

None of us came to Congress to impeach a president, but each of us took an oath to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.

BY U.S. REP. GERALD E. CONNOLLY
(D-VA)



In 2018, Democrats reclaimed our majority in the House of Representatives with a promise to deliver on bold, progressive solutions to the most pressing issues we face as a nation. Now, one year into the 116th Congress, that promise has been kept.

The House approved more than 400 pieces of legislation last year alone, more than 275 of which are bipartisan. Each of these bills is important and many are even life-changing, but there are several that are particularly worth highlighting.

I cannot go anywhere in our community without hearing how access to healthcare is affecting people's lives. While the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid expansion have increased access, Virginians are still struggling with skyrocketing prescription drug prices. That is why I am so proud the House passed the Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act, legislation that will lower prescription drug costs by increasing competition and would allow Medicare to renegotiate lower prices for more than 250 prescription drugs.

Conversations about our gun violence crisis are equally unavoidable. Like far too many communities across America, Northern Virginia is no stranger to the pain and loss wrought by mass shootings. I was Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors during the Vir-

ginia Tech massacre. I, like so many of our neighbors, will never forget the six young people we buried in the wake of that horrific day.

We need to pass gun control that makes our communities safer. That is why I was so proud the House passed the Bipartisan Background Checks Act and the Enhanced Background Checks Act. These long overdue bills would close dangerous loopholes and ensure that no American can purchase a gun without first clearing a federal background check. We are in the middle of a national crisis, and this legislation is the least we can do to address it.

We have also had important successes for our region — particularly for federal employees. Thanks to Democratic efforts, we finally secured 12 weeks of paid parental leave and a 3.1 percent pay raise for federal employees. As Chairman of the Subcommittee on Government Operations, I successfully led the fight to stop the Trump administration's disastrous proposal to abolish the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). We secured back pay for federal employees following the President's damaging 35-day shutdown, and I held a hearing on the need to provide equal protections for federal contract workers.

Of course, despite our achievements, the last several months of 2019 were not easy for the Congress or the country. None of us came to Congress to impeach a president, but each of us took an oath to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. That oath de-

manded we take action in the face of unprecedented wrongdoing by an out-of-control executive. To extort a foreign country to investigate your political opponent is an unconstitutional abuse of power. To solicit foreign interference in an American election is an unconstitutional abuse of power. And the delicate balance of power that underpins our democracy is threatened when a President disregards the Constitution by obstructing Congress to cover up these unconstitutional abuses of power.

Impeachment is a uniquely serious issue, but it isn't the only issue. Through even the most difficult moments, our legislative work never stopped. Last month, the House voted on a bipartisan basis to replace NAFTA with the United States - Mexico - Canada Agreement (USMCA). After months of tough negotiating, Democrats secured a deal that includes the strongest enforcement mechanisms of any U.S. trade agreement, as well as critical victories for workers, lower prescription drug costs, and much-needed environmental protections. We also adopted a bipartisan appropriations agreement to fully fund the government for fiscal year 2020.

These successes are a reminder of the incredible progress our country can make. But they also bring into focus the stark reality that the House of Representatives cannot make laws on its own. Leader McConnell has unilaterally blocked the Senate from debating and voting on 80 percent of the bills that we in the House have sent to his desk — most of them bipartisan, and all of them worthy of consideration. His failure of leadership, however, will not deter us from doing the business of the American people.

As we say goodbye to 2019, you can rest assured that we will build upon the progress we've made and continue to hold the Trump administration accountable in the New Year.

General Assembly Session 2020 Underway

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



COMMENTARY

Last Sunday I made my annual winter trek south to the General Assembly session. My two-hour trip is not far enough to get me to sunny weather, but it is far enough for me to be in some hot debates. I stay in a hotel with such proximity to my office that my daily commute is just a walk of a couple of minutes. Going south in the winter may be a vacation for some but for the next 60 days, it is the most intense period of work that one can imagine. Fortunately, I get home most weekends for a brief reprieve.

This trip south has been one filled with great anticipation. For the first time in two decades I am not in the minority! I chair a committee now, the Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources Committee, that will be acting on many environmental bills. I can expect that bills I introduce will get a fair hearing and most of them will pass. My colleagues and I reflect the population of the Commonwealth more than any previous General Assembly session ever. Not only do we have more women in the legislature, but we have the first ever woman Speaker of the House!

Being a member of the majority party brings enormous responsibility. As the party "in power," we must exercise our duties in ways that are judicious and fair. There is no time for political pay-back. We must shift from campaigning mode to governing mode. Although it may be tempting to do otherwise, we must conduct ourselves in ways towards the minority party members that would be the way we want to be treated in the distant future when we may find ourselves the minority again. Yes, the golden rule should apply even in the legislature.

How exciting it is to realize that in a few short months we will be able to add Virginia to the list of states that have ratified the Equal Rights Amendment even if we are the last needed for ratification. We will strengthen our existing antidiscrimination laws and add to them. We will make our communities safer from gun violence. We will add essential funding increases to our educational and human service programs. We will make critical decisions on protecting our environment and responding to climate change. And more. When all this work is done we have a governor who has pledged to sign our bills into law!

SEE PLUM, PAGE 11

Great Falls CONNECTION

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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."

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 your 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 your mind isn't on alcohol."

— Carol Barnaby, LCSW

"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.

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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Special Connections Calendar 2020
Advertising Deadlines are the previous Thursdays unless noted.

JANUARY
1/15/2020.....HomeLifeStyle
1/22/2020.....A+ Camps & Schools
1/29/2020Senior Living

FEBRUARY
2/5/2020.....Wellbeing
- National Children's Dental Health Month
2/5/2020.....Valentine's Dining & Gifts
2/12/2020.....HomeLifeStyle
2/19/2020.....A+ Camps & Schools
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- Vienna/Dakota Connection

NEWS



PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEE POPE/THE CONNECTION

More than 100 speakers turned out for a legislative hearing to testify to members of the Fairfax delegation to the General Assembly, which is the largest in Virginia. They spoke about everything from gun safety and gerrymandering to labor rights and the Equal Rights Amendment.

Opening the Floodgates

Northern Virginia Democrats wrestle with power now that they have it.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

When they were in the minority, Democrats were mostly united in their views about everything from gun control and reproductive rights to the Equal Rights Amendment. Now that they've seized power, though, members of the newly minted majority are hearing from opposite sides on everything from gerrymandering and labor rights. That push and pull was evident during a legislative hearing of the Fairfax delegation, the largest in Virginia and home of the new speaker of the House and the Senate majority leader. The hearing was dominated by dozens of firearms enthusiasts sporting orange "guns save lives" stickers from the Virginia Citizens Defense League.

"It's important that our board be given the authority to keep guns out of our rec centers and government centers," said Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay, the first to testify, drawing jeers from the heavily armed crowd.

McKay went through a number of gun control measures Democrats campaigned on last year: universal background checks and limitation on how many firearms an individual can purchase a

month as well as a ban on assault weapons to include suppressors, bump stocks and high-capacity magazines. That prompted loud and extensive heckling from the crowd, who responded by yelling loudly that he was a "traitor" and a "communist." Later in the hearing, when gun advocates took the microphone, they warned of "a civil war" if Virginia took action to limit what they view as their Second Amendment rights.

"It's a lot like looking at modern art," said Vincent Dory, who described himself as a rank-and-file member of the Virginia Citizens Defense League. "Modern art and gun control are both extremely confusing to look at, extremely pretentious and extremely ridiculous."

THE DEBATE OVER GERRY-MANDERING is one of the thorniest questions before lawmakers, an issue that divides Democrats as they prepare to take control for the first time in a generation. On one side of the debate is supporters of a group called Virginia 2021, which struck a compromise last year between Democrats and Republicans to craft a constitutional amendment that would take the power to draw legislative districts out of the hands of lawmakers and give it to a bi-

SEE DEMOCRATS, PAGE 10

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

ONGOING

Mah Jongg Cards. Order cards through Jan. 15, from Temple Rodef Shalom, 2100 Westmoreland St. 2020 Mah Jongg cards are \$8 for small cards and \$9 for large cards. Official cards and will be sent directly from the National Mah Jongg League in late March/early April 2020. Go to bit.ly/mahjonggcards2020 or email iva.gresko@gmail.com to order.

WEDNESDAY/JAN. 8

Preschool Storytime. 10:30 a.m. At Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Have fun with your little one while building early literacy foundations for reading success. Age 3-5 with adult. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/oakton>

Movies for Children and Families. 12:30 p.m. At The Alden Theatre, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Free admission Bring an indoor picnic and introduce your kids to the classic animated movies that you love. Call the Center at 703-790-0123, or visit the website, www.mcleancenter.org.

Mystery Book Club. 1 p.m. At Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Join in the monthly unraveling of a whodunit or thriller. The January selection is "The Magpie Murders" by Anthony Horowitz. Adults. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/oakton>

Topics in Astronomy. 7:30-8:30 p.m. At Turner Farm, 925 Springvale Road, Great Falls. Turner Farm hosts monthly sessions on "Topics in Astronomy at the Roll-Top Observatory" that explore everything from space missions to planets and galaxies. A classroom discussion is followed by an observatory session with telescopes, if the weather permits. Check the Analemma Society website for the monthly



THURSDAY/JAN. 30

"We Shall Overcome featuring Damien Sneed." 7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Inspired by the words and action of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "We Shall Overcome" showcases repertoire from across the African American music traditions that electrified generations of civil rights activists and defenders with interwoven spoken word from Dr. King's recorded speeches. Cost is \$45/\$35 seniors/\$20 MCC district residents. Call the Center at 703-790-0123, or visit the website, www.mcleancenter.org.

topics at <http://www.analemma.org/>. Cost is \$8 per person, and the programs are designed for participants age 8 to adult. Advance registration is required. Call 703-324-8618 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/turner-farm.

FRIDAY/JAN. 10

Free Children's Workshop. 10-11 a.m. At Green Hedges School, 415 Windover Avenue, NW, Vienna. Green Hedges School, in collaboration with Wolf Trap Foundation's Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts, will host a free interactive program, "Ask Mr. Bear," on the School's campus. Space is limited. Register at www.greenhedges.org/wolftrap.

Bilingual Storytime. 10:30 a.m. At Oakton

Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Bilingual Storytime in English and Hindi. Build your child's early literacy skills while enjoying stories, songs and activities. Birth-5 with adult. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/oakton>

English Conversation Playdate Meetup. 1 p.m. At Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Meet other parents of young children. Adults practice English while the kids enjoy play time in the same room. Birth-5 years with adult. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/oakton>

Washington Wizards Basketball Game. 4-10:30 p.m. Meet at 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Part of The Old Firehouse Center

Friday Night Activities. Teens can join the Old Firehouse staff as they take a trip into the nation's capital to watch all-star Bradley Beal and the rest of the Washington Wizards take on their NBA rival. A ticket to the game and a pre-game dinner are included in the fee. Cost is \$50/\$40 MCC district residents. Call the Center at 703-790-0123, or visit the website, www.mcleancenter.org.

Unruly Theatre Project Improv

Performance. 7 p.m. At Bards Alley, 110 Church St. NW, Vienna. Free admission The Unruly Theatre Project is The Alden's professional teen improv company dedicated to bringing comedic productions to the community. Call the Center at 703-790-0123, or visit the website, www.mcleancenter.org.

SATURDAY/JAN. 11

Family Storytime. 10:30 a.m. At Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Stories and songs for the whole family. All ages. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/oakton>

Bridge Tournament. Noon to 5 p.m. At Christ the King Lutheran Church, 10550 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. The Rotary Club of Great Falls will host a bridge tournament. This fundraiser will enable girls living in extreme poverty in the slums of India and Nepal to achieve financial independence through customized quality education, vocational training, and college scholarships. Partners and single players are both welcome. The cost is \$50 and all proceeds go to fund the education of girls through edugirls.org. To register, visit www.rotarygreatfallsva.org. Registration is open through January 7, 2020.

Ancient to Modern: Oolong Teas. 1-3 p.m. At Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. This category of semi-oxidized teas is ever expanding with new styles being developed all over the globe. Sample a variety of oolongs from old style to new, from traditional tea producing countries to countries with recently established high quality tea gardens. Tea infused treats and a take home tea sampler included. Cost is \$35. Use ID Code AE1.439C. Register at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes or call 703-222-4664.

Estate Planning Basics. 2 p.m. At Oakton

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 9

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CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 8

Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Do you have your will or trust plan in place? Attorney Bettina Lawton will cover what you need to know to make sure that what you have spent your life accumulating goes to the people or charities that you value. Adults. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/oakton>

Astronomy Festival. 5:30-7:30 p.m. At Turner Farm, 925 Springvale Road, Great Falls. There will be guided stargazing and opportunities to get a close-up look at the stars through a telescope at the roll-top observatory. Join in games and warm yourself by the campfire as you listen to ancient stories about the constellations. Hot chocolate and snacks will be available for purchase. This event is designed for stargazers age 3 to adult. Cost is \$10 per person. The festival will be canceled if it is raining or snowing. Call 703-324-8618 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/turner-farm.

JAN. 11 AND JAN. 12

Escape Room. Saturday, from 9 a.m.-7 p.m. and Sunday from 1 p.m.-4:15 p.m. At Holy Comforter Episcopal Church, 543 Beulah Road, NE, Vienna. Experience the challenge and fun of solving puzzles together to escape from two custom-designed escape rooms. No "jump scares" or other frightening elements. Suitable for ages 10 and up. It should take approximately 1 hour to complete both escape rooms. Limit of 5 participants for any one time slot. Cost is \$15 per person. Visit www.HolyComforter.com.

SUNDAY/JAN. 12

Artist Talk. 2-4 p.m. At McLean Project for the Arts, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Eve Stockton and Kyujin Lee will discuss the thoughts and processes behind Eve Stockton: Origin Stories and Replay and Reshuffle: Paintings by Kyujin Lee, currently on display in MPA's Emerson and Atrium Galleries, respectively. Known for large-scale woodcut prints, Stockton's works are inspired by a close observation of nature and an eclectic interest in science. Combining the spontaneity of surrealist automatism with refined illustrative skill, Kyujin Lee draws on the world of fairy tale to compose paintings exploring dreams, identity and personal transformation. Through Feb. 29.

Hot Cocoa Party. 3 to 5 p.m. At Riverbend Park, 8700 Potomac Hills Street, Great Falls. Take a walk-through Riverbend Park's winter wonderland with a naturalist, and then take the chill off inside with a hot cocoa party. Jazz up your cup of cocoa up with goodies, listen to winter stories, and make a wintry craft. For ages 4 to adult. The cost is \$15 per person. Call 703-759-9018 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend.

MONDAY/JAN. 13

Baby Storytime. 10:30 a.m. At Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Have fun and build early literacy foundations for reading success. Books, songs and rhymes. Birth-18 months with adult. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/oakton>

Legos in the Library. 6:30 p.m. At Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Build anything with Duplos and Legos. Age 2-12. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/oakton>

TUESDAY/JAN. 14

Toddler Tales. 10:30 a.m. At Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Have fun and build early



SATURDAY/JAN. 25

Hiplet Ballerinas. 6 p.m. At The Alden Theatre, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Hiplet fuses classical pointe technique with African, Latin, Hip-Hop and urban dance styles that are rooted in communities of color. It was specifically designed to make ballet accessible to all, by mixing it with current popular songs that will be familiar to audiences who don't normally attend ballet performances. Cost is \$30/\$20 MCC district residents. Call the Center at 703-790-0123, or visit the website, www.mcleancenter.org.

literacy foundations for reading success. Books, songs and rhymes. Age 18 months-3 years with adult. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/oakton>

Canasta Group. 12:30 p.m. At Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Enjoy socializing while you play Canasta. Beginners welcome. Adults. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/oakton>

Teen Knitting Club. 5 p.m. At Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Learn knitting techniques to make beautiful creations. Teens. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/oakton>

Money Matters Book Club. 7 p.m. At Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. The selection is "Mastering the Market Cycle: Getting the Odds on Your Side" by Howard Marks. Adults. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/oakton>

Author Greg Wilson. 7:30 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The McLean Historical Society will feature author Greg Wilson who will address "The Adventures of Jonathan Roberts - The Civil War Quaker Scout in Northern Virginia." Everyone is welcome. Contact Carole Herrick at 703-356-8223.

TUESDAYS/JAN. 14-FEB. 18

Beginners Mah Jongg Class. 12:30-2:30 p.m. At Great Falls Library, 9830 VA-193, Great Falls. Learn to play the fun, fast-paced game of Mah Jongg. Registration is now open for an Adult Beginners Mah Jongg class. The class will run for six weeks on Tuesday afternoons from 12:30-2:30 p.m. beginning Jan. 14 through Feb. 18. Attendees should plan to attend all six sessions. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov.

WEDNESDAY/JAN.15

Preschool Storytime. 10:30 a.m. At Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. Have fun with your

little one while building early literacy foundations for reading success. Age 3-5 with adult. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/oakton>

McLean Newcomers and Neighbors Luncheon. 11:30 a.m. At Mylo's Grill, 6238 Old Dominion Dr, McLean. Lunch, \$30 per person. Clare Cushman of the Supreme Court Historical Society will discuss Supreme Court food traditions and recipes. To attend, pay at <https://squareup.com/market/mclean-newcomers-club>. No reservations will be accepted after Friday, Jan. 10. Visit www.McLeanNewcomers.org.

THURSDAY/JAN. 16

Oakton Book Discussion Group. 7 p.m. At Oakton Library, 10304 Lynnhaven Place, Oakton. The January selection is Go, Went, Gone by Jenny Erpenback. Everyone is welcome to join. Adults. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/oakton>

WEDNESDAY/JAN. 16

Monthly Book Club. 10:30 a.m. to noon. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Open activities and games at MCC are subject to change. Call the Center at 703-790-0123, or visit the website, www.mcleancenter.org.

FRIDAY/JAN. 17

Unruly Theatre Project Improv Performance. 7 p.m. At The Old Firehouse, 1440 Chain Bridge Rd., McLean. Free admission The Unruly Theatre Project is The Alden's professional teen improv company dedicated to bringing comedic productions to the community. Call the Center at 703-790-0123, or visit the website, www.mcleancenter.org.

JAN. 17-26

Joshua's Hands Quilting Event. Purcellville. Joshua's Hands hosts free quilting events to support wounded servicepeople. Call 540-454-7827; Info@JoshuasHands.org, or www.JoshuasHands.org.

Here's What's Happening at MCC!

The Old Firehouse Friday Night Trip



Washington Wizards Basketball Game
Friday, Jan. 10
Activity No: 5304.320
1440 Chain Bridge Rd.
\$50/\$40 MCC district residents

Special Event



Be Fit McLean
Saturday, Jan. 18
11 a.m.-2 p.m.
Free admission



Closing Notice

Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Monday, Jan. 20

Presented by The Alden



Midday Movies:
Foreign-Language Films
"Timbuktu" (2014)
Wednesday, Jan. 22, 1 p.m.
Free admission

5th and 6th Grader Party



Snow Ball
Friday, Jan. 24, 7-9 p.m.
Activity No: 4603.320
1440 Chain Bridge Rd.
\$35/\$25 MCC district residents

Presented by The Alden



Hiplet Ballerinas
Saturday, Jan. 25, 6 p.m.
\$30/\$20 MCC district residents



The McLean
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www.mcleancenter.org

Home of the Alden Theatre
www.aldentheatre.org

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-Werner Heisenberg

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NEWS

Democrats Debate Priorities

FROM PAGE 7

partisan commission. One volunteer with Virginia 2021 even broke into song, crooning to the tune of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen."

"All rest ye merry gentle folk, let nothing you dismay. Remember gerrymandering will let us get our way," sang Michael Martin. "And save us from all others hopes. They do not have a say. Oh, tidings of corruption and joy."

The proposed amendment passed last year, and because of the amendment process in Virginia it has to pass again this year and then go to voters. But now that Democrats have control of the General Assembly, they would be the ones drawing the maps. Many Democrats say they would be squandering their newfound power by yielding that power to a commission, especially because the maps would likely end up before the Republican-dominated Supreme Court of Virginia. Advocates of the amendment say that can be fixed by enabling legislation that would require a special master draw the districts. But many people associated with Indivisible groups in Northern Virginia are urging lawmakers to vote no on the amendment.

"If I could rid myself of the concerns that I have with respect to that amendment and some of the backdoor was this could work against Democrats, in particular, I would support it," said Luke Levasseur of McLean. "I cannot support it, and I believe that the amendment that we have is not a step forward. It's a step in the wrong direction, sideways, potentially off a cliff."

LABOR ISSUES have long been a sticking point in Richmond, where the Republican majority and their allies in the business world have resisted the agenda of labor leaders. Now things have changed, and labor unions across Virginia are pressing lawmakers on a lengthy list of agenda items. SEIU Virginia 512 president David Broder asked members of the Fairfax delegation to raise the minimum wage, allowing collective bargaining for public employees and pass a homecare workers bill of rights — slate of bills to make sure homecare workers under the state's Medicaid program get a living wage, benefits and health care.

"Many of us are working longer hours for less pay with fewer benefits than ever before with virtually no rights on the job," said Broder. "Many of us have two or



PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEE POPE/THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay is heckled by heavily-armed firearms enthusiasts as he calls for the General Assembly to give local governments the ability to ban guns at government centers.

"Many of us are working longer hours for less pay with fewer benefits than ever before with virtually no rights on the job."

— David Broder, president of SEIU Virginia 512

three jobs just to put together the income that one job used to provide, and so it's no surprise that under the previous Republican majorities OXFAM America ranked Virginia as the worst state for working people two years in a row."

Notably absent from the SEIU's list of priorities was repealing Virginia's infamous right-to-work law, a 1940s era restriction on employers from compelling employees to pay union dues. Broder says his organization has always been in favor of repealing the law, which he says hurts working families. But, he adds, it's not a priority because it wouldn't help as

many people as raising the minimum wage or allowing collective bargaining for public employees. Representatives of the American Federation of Teachers and the Fairfax Education Association, however, both outlined repealing the right-to-work law as a top priority.

"They would be more appropriately named right to fire-laws or right-to-work for less laws," said David Walrod of the Fairfax County Federation of Teachers. "By stripping employees of the right to collectively organize and have a collective voice, the power is returned to CEOs rather than employees."



PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEE POPE/THE CONNECTION

SEIU Virginia 512 president David Broder asks lawmakers to raise the minimum wage, allowing collective bargaining for public employees and pass a homecare workers bill of rights.

BULLETIN

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

ONGOING

Route 123 Bridge Rehabilitation. Work began Friday, Jan. 3 to rehabilitate the northbound and southbound Route 123 (Chain Bridge Road) bridges over Route 7 (Leesburg Pike) to improve safety for drivers and pedestrians and extend the overall life of the bridges, according to the Virginia Department of Transportation. Improvements include:

- Repairing and resurfacing the concrete bridge decks;
- Repairing bridge piers, abutments and bearings;
- Painting steel bridge beams;
- Repaving Route 123 adjacent to the bridges.

Work will take place exclusively at night. Drivers can expect lane closures on Route 123 and Route 7 according to the following weekly schedule:

- Sunday night through Thursday night: 10 p.m. to 5 a.m.
- Friday night: 10 p.m. to 9 a.m.
- Saturday night: 10 p.m. to 8 a.m.

WEDNESDAYS/JAN. 8 - 29

Active Aging Wellness Exercise Class. 11 a.m. to noon. At Oakton Church of the Brethren, 10025 Courthouse Road, Vienna. The classes focus on low impact aerobics, balance, coordination and stretching. Class meets for 1 hour, once a week. Cost is \$40 for 8 week session - payable to Sun Fitness LLC. Questions or to Register contact Casey Tarr, eileentarr1@verizon.net or 703-821-6838.

THURSDAY/JAN. 9

Students and Volunteers Wanted. 7 to 8:30 p.m. At St. Mark's Catholic Church, 9972 Vale Road, Vienna. Students and volunteers are needed for the St. Mark's Catholic Church English as a Second Language (ESL) Ministry. Seeking Students and Volunteers to participate in the upcoming Winter 2020 Term, Jan. 14-Mar. 12. The goal is to "Welcome Everyone" and provide a program where adults from all ethnic and religious backgrounds can come and learn English and acclimate better to life in the U.S. No experience is necessary to Volunteer. All classes take place on Tuesday and Thursday evenings at St. Mark Christian Formation Center. Call Monica at 703-980-9380, Bob at 703-242-7449, email stmarksesl@gmail.com, or see the Web site at www.stmarkesl.org.

Plum

FROM PAGE 4

Last Saturday's public hearing by the Fairfax General Assembly delegation reminded us that there is not total accord on what we will be doing. About half the audience of around 300 people in attendance seemed to be there to shout down those with whom they disagreed. Their efforts to show support for what they define as their second amendment rights was to violate the first amendment rights of others. The lack of civility in public discourse across the country has found its way to Virginia. What a shame.

I am honored to be here, and I am going to do my best to fairly represent your interests. Make a trip south to see me and the legislative process over the next couple of months. To live-stream the legislative sessions, go to <https://viriniageneralassembly.gov/house/chamber/chamberstream.php> for the House and to http://virinia-senate.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=3 for the Senate sessions. To follow the progress of bills, visit <http://lis.virginia.gov/>.

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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.

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