

# Fairfax CONNECTION

'We Feel So  
Welcome Here; this  
City Is Really Special'

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James Catto and  
daughter Anya at the  
grand opening of the  
ChiCeLaCu! Spanish  
immersion school in  
Fairfax City.

Come One, Come All, to  
Fairfax's Chocolate Festival

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Predatory  
Student Lenders

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Fairfax Divorce Workshop.**

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**Date:** Saturday, February 8, 2020  
Saturday, March 14, 2020  
Saturday, April 18, 2020

**Time:** 9:00 - 9:30 AM - Registration  
9:30 - 1:00 PM - Workshop

**Place:** Cooper Ginsberg Gray PLLC  
9302 Lee Highway/Suite 1200  
Fairfax, VA 22031

Please join us for coffee at our Second Saturday Divorce Workshop and get the information and support from professionals: a family law attorney, a financial adviser, or other professionals who will help guide you through the divorce process. Speakers may vary for each workshop.

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## News

**Katlyn Weiser speaks at a press conference in Richmond in favor of a bill designed to crack down on egregious practices of student loan servicing companies.**



## Predatory Student Lenders

**Northern Virginia lawmakers hope to crack down on student-loan servicing companies.**

By MICHAEL LEE POPE  
THE CONNECTION

**A**s a high school student, Katlyn Weiser dreamed of attending George Mason University. She wanted to have a career in public service, being in the room where it happens on Capitol Hill. But instead she found herself under a mountain of debt, struggling to keep up with meeting minimum pay-

ments and ultimately being forced to make a difficult decision about her future. She says she'll never forget the day when an agent from loan-servicing company Navient told her that she should probably drop out of school to pay off her student debt.

"I cried," says Weiser. "I cried a lot because I had come so far. I had become the first person in my family to go to college,

SEE STUDENT LOANS, PAGE 5

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# Come One, Come All, to Fairfax's Chocolate Festival

Candy, cakes, ice cream, brownies, fudge, cupcakes...

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

No, Fairfax doesn't have a team in this Sunday's Super Bowl, but excitement here is running high, anyway. That's because, this weekend, the City hosts its 28th annual Chocolate Lovers Festival.

Slated for Friday, Jan. 31, from 6-8 p.m.; Saturday, Feb. 1, from 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; and Sunday, Feb. 2, from noon-4 p.m., it offers everything from cupcakes to candy, fudge, cakes, brownies, ice cream and even a chocolate fountain.

Friday's Liquid Chocolate event runs from 6-8 p.m. with a mouthwatering assortment of chocolate libations. It'll be held inside a heated tent on Old Town Square's upper parking lot, 3999 University Drive. And because it's so much fun, it'll return Saturday from 1-6 p.m. There'll be chocolate beverages for all ages, including chocolate beer and wine, chocolate tea and coffee, chocolate soda and milk, hot chocolate, cacao (chocolate) juice, chocolate milkshakes, chocolate-covered strawberry liquor, and a dessert-wine pairing.

Also on Saturday, the Kiwanis Club of Fairfax will offer barbecue lunches and crafts vendors, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m., at Fire Station 3, at 4081 University Drive.

The centerpiece event, the Taste of Chocolate, is Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., and Sunday, noon-4 p.m., and features two floors of vendors in Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive (corner of Main Street and University Drive).

Admission is free; visitors buy pogs for \$1 each and then browse vendors' tables to see the wide array of chocolate treats being offered. They purchase them with pogs and may buy as many pogs as they want from roaming volunteers in red aprons.

The goodies include chocolate candies, bars, brownies, cakes and fudge, chocolate-covered strawberries and ice cream. And one of the biggest hits each year are the chocolate fountains into which customers may dip fruit, cream-filled doughnut holes, Rice Krispie treats or marshmallows.

The vendors will include: Cameron's Coffee & Chocolates, The Capital Candy Jar, Capitol Chocolate Fountains, Chocotenango, Confection Connection, Dave's Candy Kitchen, El Ceibo/Diestro, The Dough Jar, Lammar Marie's Gourmet Popcorn, Le Papiyon Chocolatier, Mike's Fudge, Pacari Chocolate, River-Sea Chocolate, Rumlutions Rum Cakes, Sugar Mama's Ice Cream, The Sweet Life Bakery and Veritas Artizen Chocolate.

Cake walks will be held Saturday, from noon-4 p.m., and Sunday, from 1-4 p.m., in Old Town Square, but may be moved indoors if there's inclement weather. Parti-



Annie Greener dips a Rice Krispie treat into the chocolate fountain at 2019's Taste of Chocolate.



Vendors at Confection Connection wait on customers at last year's event.

pants will have the chance to win cakes. See the schedule of events for details about more activities for children and adults. Slated are magic, juggling, musical performances, face-painting, fairytales, a cake walk, fire-safety puppet show, Chocolate Caper mock trial, cupcake-decorating and open houses in historic buildings. In addition, the LOVE sign will be in Old Town Square, all weekend, and the Washington Nationals' racing presidents will visit Saturday, from noon-2 p.m. A silent auction features items donated by local businesses. It's set for Sunday, from noon-4 p.m., at 10426 Main St. Those interested may get a sneak peek of the auction items, Friday, from 6-8 p.m. And this year, there's a new twist: All items will have a "buy me now" price – meaning people may purchase and walk away with their items, on the spot,

instead of waiting until the end of the festival to see if they won the bid. People may also participate in the Golden Ticket Contest, in which three golden tickets will be hidden within 1,200 chocolate bars made by local chocolatier, Cameron's Coffee & Chocolates. Some 22 Old Town businesses – see list at <https://fairfaxcityconnected.com/2019/12/16/goldenticket2020/> will sell the chocolate bars for \$3 each, beginning Jan. 31. Lucky finders of the golden ticket will be rewarded with a Chocolate Lovers Gift Basket and a tour of the Cameron's facility in Fairfax. Free and handicapped parking for the festival is available at these locations: % **Bank of America**, 10440 Main St. (accessible from Route 236 and North Street). % **City Hall**, 10455 Armstrong St. (accessible from Route 123/Chain Bridge Road and George Mason

Boulevard). % **City of Fairfax Regional Library**, 10360 North St. (accessible from University Drive and Old Lee Highway). % **East Street parking lot** (accessible from Route 236/Main Street and East Street). % **Fairfax County Courthouse Garage B**, 4400 Chain Bridge Road (accessible from Page Avenue). % **Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center**, 10209 Main St. % **Fire Station 3**, 4081 University Drive. % **Old Town Plaza**, 3955 Chain Bridge Road (accessible from Route 123/Chain Bridge Road and University Drive). % **Old Town Village** (behind Pacer's, 10427 North St.) Open at noon Saturday and all day Sunday; (accessible from University Drive). % **Sager Avenue parking lot** (accessible from Sager Avenue and University Drive).

SEE EVENT SCHEDULE. PAGE 6

## Fairfax Academy Student Wins Award for Video

Chantilly High junior Sujay Khona is also a student in the Television and Media Production class at the Fairfax Academy. And the video he made, "The Savings Genie," recently won first place in the Burke & Herbert Bank regional contest for the American Bankers Assn.'s Lights, Camera, Save! video contest. As his prize, he received a \$350 gift card from the bank, and his Academy teacher, Matthew Balthrop, received a \$50 gift card. Khona's video now goes to the national contest, for which voting on social media will determine the winner.

(From left) A jubilant Sujay Khona poses with his prize certificate and his Academy instructor, Matthew Balthrop.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERIN MOLEK



# The People's Business

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

**T**he General Assembly has shifted into high gear to get through its agenda of thousands of bills in sixty days. The old saying that you cannot be in two places at one time is disproven every day as the 140 members of the House and Senate scurry among subcommittees and standing committees on which they serve and the subcommittees and committees before which they have to present their bills. By strategically placing an assistant or intern in one meeting while the member moves quickly among several meetings, it may even appear that a member is in more than even two places at one time. The legislature is not a place for lengthy contemplation but rather is a place for action. After all, we ran on a platform of what

we promised we were going to do, and the legislative session is the time of action to deliver on our promises.

With such a "meat grinder" approach can we trust the outcome of a legislative session? Consider that in order for a bill to become a law it must meet the approval of a subcommittee and full committee, passage twice in the full house on two different days, the same process in the other house of the legislature, and the signature of the governor.

All that time there are hundreds of advocates, constituents, lobbyists and others looking over your shoulder and providing comments on what you are doing. Bills get intense scrutiny before they are passed. It is easier to describe how a bill does not make it than it is to tell how a bill becomes a law. Fewer than half the bills intro-



duced become law.

Election outcomes do matter for to change the outcome of debate on important issues it may be easier to change the people in the legislature through the ballot box than it is to change the minds of incumbent legislators. A case in point is ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment that was debated for decades but approved within a week in a General Assembly made up of new members supporting the rights of women. Those same new members, joining the progressives who were already there, have even now approved sweeping new common-sense gun safety laws such as my universal background check bill that had been defeated for two decades by previous members of a subcommittee of the House. Laws that put barriers in the way of women in making choices con-

cerning their own reproductive health are being repealed. Laws that disproportionately affected people of color are being repealed. The criminal justice system is undergoing a major shift to make it work more fairly for all people. Challenges to the environment are being met with meaningful legislation.

It is impossible to list in a short column the thousands of bills before the legislature. You can however review the full list with descriptions and status at [lis.virginia.gov](http://lis.virginia.gov) and for the first time this year you can see livestreaming of most full and subcommittee meetings at [virginiageneralassembly.gov/house/chamber/chamberstream](http://virginiageneralassembly.gov/house/chamber/chamberstream) and [virginia-senate.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view\\_id=3](http://virginia-senate.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=3). And you can visit the Capitol in Richmond; all meetings are open to the public. Some say the process is like making sausage. The important thing is it is doing the people's business.

## After Virginia Ratification Of Equal Rights Amendment Beyer: 'Next Steps Depend On Congress'

**R**ep. Don Beyer (D-8), a longtime supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), and cosponsor of legislation to extend the deadline for ratification, issued the following statement after the Virginia General Assembly voted to ratify the ERA: "Today, Virginia became the 38<sup>th</sup> state to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment, and I could not be more proud. Ratification of the ERA is long overdue, but it is wonderful that Virginia took the historic step today which brought the Amendment across the three-fourths threshold necessary for ratification.



**Rep. Don Beyer (D-8)**

"I congratulate and applaud everyone in the Virginia General Assembly, including Senator McClellan, Senator Locke, and Delegate Carroll Foy for making

this long-overdue legislation a top priority, and seeing it through successfully.

"The recent legal opinion issued by the Trump Administration via the Justice Department makes it clear that the next steps depend on Congress. I am determined to do everything I can in Congress to help pave the way for the final ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. Equality, justice, and history demand nothing less."

Beyer is a cosponsor of House legislation to extend the deadline for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, sponsored by Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA). The issue of

the deadline was raised most recently by a Trump Administration legal opinion arguing that the ERA could not be ratified because of the expiration of the original deadline. Beyer is also a cosponsor of new Equal Rights Amendment legislation introduced by Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY).

Beyer's most recent Annual Women's Conference and Forum focused specifically on the need to pass the Equal Rights Amendment, with a panel discussion that featured speakers from VA Ratify ERA (Virginia's campaign to ratify the ERA) and the ERA Coalition.

## Wexton: 'A Historic Moment'

**I**n response to the final passage of the Equal Rights Amendment in the Virginia General Assembly, Rep. Jennifer Wexton (D-10) issued the following statement: "Today, Virginia sent a powerful message to the rest of the country — that 'Equal Justice Under Law' is a constitutional right for women.

"I was a sponsor of the Equal Rights Amendment during my time in Richmond, and I am proud of my former colleagues in Richmond who made this issue a priority in this year's session.

"This is a historic moment nearly one hundred years in the making. Thanks to the tireless work of so



**Rep. Jennifer Wexton (D-10)**

many trailblazers and activists over the years, women — finally — are one step closer to being included in our nation's founding document."

## 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 libel, grammar, good taste and factual errors. Send to:

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Alexandria VA 22314  
Call: 703-917-6444.

By e-mail: [editors@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:editors@connectionnewspapers.com)

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## NEWS

# Student Loans

FROM PAGE 2

one of the first people in my high school to go to college, and it was sad to hear that because I had come so far.”

Weiser did not listen. She didn’t drop out, and she’s now a senior at George Mason University. She says she has determined that she can’t afford a career in public service, so she plans on being a lobbyist instead. She’s one of the student borrowers state Sen. Janet Howell (D-32) wants to help with a bill she calls the Borrowers Bill of Rights. It would use the power of the State Corporation Commission to crack down on what she calls the egregious practices of student loan servicing companies.

“We can regulate these student loan servicers to ensure we’re protecting our borrowers from shady practices, and believe me there are shady practices,” says Howell. “Every other type of debt is regulated in Virginia except student loans debt. This lack of regulation is egregious given one million borrowers are collectively carrying more than \$41 billion worth of student debt.”

**DEMOCRATS HAVE WANTED** to crack down on student-loan servicing companies for years, but the Republican-led House of Delegates has blocked the effort. Del. Marcus Simon (D-53) has introduced legislation to have the State Corporation Commission regulate student-loan servicing companies for years only to be blocked by the GOP majority over and over. Even when Howell was able to get similar legislation through the Senate, Simon found that the Republican-led House was not interested.

“It’s interesting that a number of delegates who have been sympathetic but didn’t think this was the right solution voted for the bill in committee this year,” said Simon. “So I think we’re on a glider path here, although there are a few people who continue to believe that we shouldn’t be helping out students for whatever reason.”

This year, Democrats are in control of the General Assembly. That’s opened the floodgates for a

number of issues, and cracking down on student-loan servicing companies is one of them. Howell’s bill cracking down on student loan servicing companies passed a Senate committee with a unanimous vote. And Simon has a similar bill that’s already passed the House with an 84 to 15 vote.

“When student-loan servicers engage in deceptive and predatory practices, borrowers can face insurmountable barriers to financial security,” says Anna Scholl, executive director of Progress Virginia.

“When student loan servicers engage in deceptive and predatory practices, borrowers can face insurmountable barriers to financial security.”

**THE BILL** requires student loan servicing companies get a license to operate in Virginia from the State Corporation Commission, which would crack down on

egregious practices like misrepresenting the amount of money due, recklessly applying loan payments to outstanding balances and failing to report payment history to consumer credit bureaus. Violators would be hit with a \$2,500 fee.

“This bill is not about free college,” said Seth Frotman, executive director of the Student Borrower Protection Center. “This bill is about making sure borrowers in the commonwealth who took on debt to chase the American dream aren’t ripped off in the process.”

All of the egregious practices outlined in the bill are already illegal. But borrowers would have to hire a lawyer and file a federal lawsuit to take action, which is not a workable solution for people who are already under a mountain of debt. Instead, this bill makes these actions a violation of state law and empowers the State Corporation Commission to go after bad actors. That way borrowers who feel they’ve been wronged could file a complaint with the Bureau of Financial Regulation.

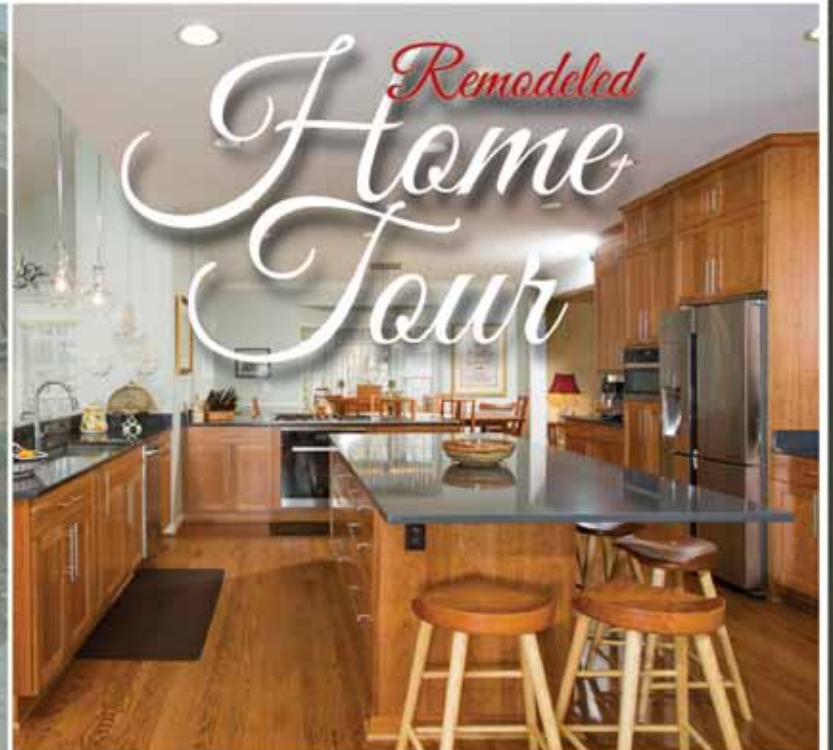
“Why are Virginia borrowers having to resort to lawsuits for their consumer protections?” asked Del. Cia Price (D-95). “It is past time for student loan borrowers in Virginia — like me — to have common-sense protections.”

**“This lack of regulation is egregious given one million borrowers are collectively carrying more than \$41 billion worth of student debt.”**

— Sen. Janet Howell (D-32)

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PHOTOS BY

**Susan LaumeThe workhouse, symbolically reflected in window glass behind her, Lucy Burns statute dominates the museum.**

## Lucy Burns Museum Now Open

The Lucy Burns Museum chronicles the women and events leading to suffrage. Through period photographs and graphics, visitors learn of 18th and 19th century activism in the atmosphere of the restored workhouse. Visitor Jay Roberts, of Alexandria, one of about 100 opening day visitors, said in speaking of the museum, “It’s a wonderfully great example

of adaptive reuse and a much needed place to tell the women’s rights story.”

Located at the Workhouse Art Center in Lorton; the museum’s grand opening celebration is scheduled for May 9, 2020. It’s open to the public now, Wednesday through Saturday 11 am - 6 pm; and Sunday Noon - 5 pm.

—SUSAN LAUME



**Museum chronicles the 19th Amendment’s path through history.**

## 2020 Chocolate Festival Schedule

### FRIDAY, JAN. 31

<i><b>Event</b></i>	<i><b>Description</b></i>	<i><b>Time</b></i>	<i><b>Location</b></i>	<i><b>Price \$</b></i>
Liquid Chocolate	Heated tent with a variety of chocolate beverages from chocolate wine, beer, soda, milk, hot chocolate and more! Dessert pairings with wine as well.	6 - 8 PM	Old Town Square	Free Admission; Alcohol Tasting - \$2; Non Alcohol Tasting - \$1.
Silent Auction: Sneak Peek!	Come and take a look at what’s going to be auctioned off the following morning!	6 - 8 PM	Old Town Square	Free Admission
Chocolate, Music and More	Part of the Old Town Hall Performance Series, come enjoy beautiful music of Polaris Piano Trio and tasty treats by a Pastry Chef!	8 PM	Sherwood Center	Free Admission

### SATURDAY, FEB. 1

<i><b>Event</b></i>	<i><b>Time</b></i>	<i><b>Location</b></i>	<i><b>Price \$</b></i>
Kiwanis BBQ Lunch & Craft Vendors	9 AM - 3 PM	Fire Station #3 - 4081 University Dr	\$
Fairfax Host Lions Club - Free Eye Screenings	9 AM - 3 PM	Fire Station #3	
Open House: Fairfax Museum & Visitor Center - “Hands on History”	9 AM - 5 PM	10209 Main St	
A Chocolate Caper Mock Trial - Beauty and the Beast (2 Showings)	10 AM AND 2 PM	Historic Fairfax Courthouse - 4000 Chain Bridge Rd	
City of Fairfax Police: Anti-Bullying & Online Safety Tips for Kids	10:30 AM	City of Fairfax Regional Library - 10360 North St	
Child Fingerprinting by Fairfax County Sheriff’s Office	10 AM - 3 PM	Historic Fairfax Courthouse	
Historic Records & Archives	10 AM - 3 PM	Historic Fairfax Courthouse	
Ford House: Historical Exhibit & Chocolate Treats	10 AM - 4 PM	3977 Chain Bridge Rd	
Balloon Animals	10 AM - 4 PM	City of Fairfax Regional Library	
Taste of Chocolate*doors close at 4:30 pm	10 AM - 5 PM	Old Town Hall - 3999 University Dr	\$
Harley Eye Candy Photos	11 AM - 3 PM	City of Fairfax Regional Library	
Open House: Legato School	11 AM - 4 PM	Corner of Chain Bridge Rd & Judicial Dr	
Be Our Valentine: Music with Cody & BJ	12 PM	City of Fairfax Regional Library	
So You Think You’re Smarter Than A Lawyer?	12:30 PM	Historic Fairfax Courthouse	
Tours: Ratcliffe-Allison-Pozer House	12 - 4 PM	10386 Main St	
Cake Walk	12 - 4 PM	Old Town Square	
Liquid Chocolate	1 PM - 6 PM	Old Town Square	\$
Chocolate Dipped Tales with KayDee Puppets	1:30 PM	City of Fairfax Regional Library	
Make A Valentine	3:30 PM	City of Fairfax Regional Library	

### SUNDAY, FEB. 2

<i><b>Event</b></i>	<i><b>Time</b></i>	<i><b>Location</b></i>	<i><b>Price \$</b></i>
Open House: Fairfax Museum & Visitor Center - “Hands on History”	9 AM - 5 PM	10209 Main St	
Silent Auction	Noon – 4 PM	10426 Main St.	
Taste of Chocolate	12 PM - 4 PM *doors close at 3:30 PM	Old Town Hall	\$
Open House: Legato School	12 PM - 3 PM	Corner of Chain Bridge Rd & Judicial Dr	
Tours: Ratcliffe-Allison-Pozer House	12 PM - 4 PM	10386 Main St	
Construct a Cupcake	12 PM - 3 PM	Twin’s Ace Hardware - 10310 Main St (2nd Floor)	
<i>Minimum donation of \$3.00 per cupcake (all monies will be donated to the National Children’s Medical Center)</i>			
Magic & Juggling with Jonathan Austin	1:30 PM	City of Fairfax Regional Library	
Cake Walk	1 - 4 PM	Old Town Square	
Balloon Animals	1-4 PM	City of Fairfax Regional Library	
City of Fairfax Band Association Ensembles, Art and more	2-4 PM	Old Town Square	
Chocolate Covered Fairy Tales with Gary Lloyd	3 PM	City of Fairfax Regional Library	



## NEWS

# 'We Feel So Welcome Here; this City Is Really Special'

## Spanish immersion center opens in Fairfax City.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

Since 2007, ChiCeLaCu! (Children's Center for Language and Culture) has offered Spanish immersion programs for children in Vienna. And on Saturday, Jan 25, it opened a new location in Fairfax City, at 10201 Main St., Suite 230 (the World Gym building).

The new space is cheerful, colorful, warm and inviting. Geared for ages 3-12, the school offers programs for preschoolers, plus afterschool and Saturday classes – and even summer camps – combining innovative strategies with traditional, classroom learning.

"When children learn Spanish earlier, it's easier," said school director and founder, Maureen Santamaria. When she and her husband bought a home in Fairfax City, two years ago, she began looking for a place to open another school here. Then she found and renovated this spot. "We feel so welcome here," she said. "This City is really special, and I appreciate its support. They



PHOTO COURTESY OF DANETTE NGUYEN

**Students and City Council members Janice Miller and Jennifer Passey look on while Director Maureen Santamaria (in pink) and Fairfax Mayor David Meyer cut the ribbon on the school.**

really want businesses to come here."

ChiCeLaCu!'s program is also in three FCPS elementary schools. "They're long-term programs so the children can really learn the language well," said Santamaria. "It takes about four years to become really

fluent."

In Fairfax City, the emphasis is on preschool and Saturday classes. Preschool is for ages 3-5, either three or five days/week. Students may attend from 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., from 2:30-4:30 p.m., or all day. Sat-

urday classes, for kindergarten through sixth grade, run from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

But afterschool classes and summer camps are also offered; see [www.childrencenterlanguage.com](http://www.childrencenterlanguage.com). Or call 571-210-0161 or 703-992-8722. And for working parents, the school is open from 7 a.m.-6 p.m.

Originally from Nicaragua, Santamaria said, "My mom always emphasized the importance of my four siblings and I going to a university and getting degrees, and we all did. This is my passion – I'm a teacher with a bachelor's in education, and I teach Spanish in the classroom."

**THE SCHOOL** also has an administrative staff, plus 10 other teachers, who've all been with ChiCeLaCu! a long time. Classes are small, with 8-10 students per teacher. Five classrooms are used on Saturday, and three during the week. And since 2007, some 4,000 children have attended ChiCeLaCu!'s programs.

"You need to be dedicated, perseverant, patient and hardworking," explained Santamaria. "And if you have those qualities, then you can succeed. The students, parents and teachers here all have a special connection as a community. Our teach-

SEE SPANISH IMMERSION CENTER.  
PAGE 9

lost (adj): 1. unable to find the way. 2. not appreciated or understood. 3. no longer owned or known

## Adopt Donate Volunteer

Volunteers needed for adoption events, fostering, transportation, adoption center caretaking and more.



[lostdogandcatrescue.org](http://lostdogandcatrescue.org)

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# CALENDAR

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

## ONGOING

**Funday Monday.** 10:30-11:30 a.m. Mondays now thru March. At Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Play, paint, sing and dance at Funday Monday in the City of Fairfax. This season they are bringing back My Gym to help everyone move and play together, Oh Susannah! with her guitar to sing some old songs and have just as much fun with new ones, and Good Gollie it's Mollie will be coming 'round with more games and playtime fun. They would like to welcome some new friends as well like Drew Blue Shoes, a magician whose magic will leave you mystified and a kids' nature puppet show will come to teach us about the jungle in our backyard. This season they have the local animal shelter and local Spanish emersion group Mi Chu Chu Train coming with specially made programs. Visit the website: <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts>

**All You Need is Love.** Now thru Feb. 16. At Torpedo Factory Artists @ Mosaic, 2905 District Ave., #105, Fairfax. In celebration of Valentine's Day, Torpedo Factory artists are tackling one of society's most complex human emotions — Love. In its newest exhibit titled All You Need is &e, the gallery is presenting a selection of original paintings, photographs, jewelry, scarves, ceramics and more, that reflect its artists' interpretations of love. Open Wednesday thru Sunday 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.

**St. James Intramural High School Basketball League.** Now thru March 10. At the St. James Sports, Wellness and Entertainment Complex, 6805 Industrial Road, Springfield. The St. James invites you to participate in its Middle School Basketball League for Boys & Girls (8th to 12th grade), Now thru March 10, in the new 33,000 square foot Basketball Courthouse on four high school regulation sized courts. The TSJ Intramural High School Basketball League registration fee is \$250 per player and \$600 per team. All games are officiated and statistics provided. The TSJ Intramural High School Basketball league also includes a Playoff round where top teams in the league will meet. Visit <https://www.thestjames.com/sports/basketball/sessions/8/courses/tsj-basketball-winter-team-or-contact-alpha-or-pele-with-any-questions-at-703-239-6841>.

## SUNDAY/FEB. 2

**DanceFest 2020.** At George Mason University, Harris Theatre, Fairfax. The DanceFest 2020 Gala is a celebration of dance in Northern Virginia, with companies from the Virginia Dance Coalition (VADC). A fascinating collection of different genres ranging from ballet to classical Indian, to contemporary are being performed. Featured professional companies include Kista Tucker Dance, DanceArtTheater and Dancin Unlimited, along with the Fairfax Ballet and the Ballet Arts Ensemble. The event continues on Sunday, Feb. 2 with an all-day workshop of master classes and a Festival performance. **SCHEDULE:** Sunday, Feb. 2, 2020 – 9:30 am – 4:30 pm/ Full-day Workshop with Master; Classes in Modern, Jazz, Indian Dance and Step. Workshop held at the GMU DeLaski Performing Arts Building; PLUS: Sunday, Feb. 2, 2020 – 5:00 pm/ Afternoon Festival Performance\* of Emerging Companies - Tickets: \$10.

## THURSDAY/JAN. 30

**New Year Reception.** 5-7 p.m. At Fairfax County Government Center Forum, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax. Everyone is invited to attend Chairman Jeff McKay's New Year Reception. Please bring canned food to donate to Stuff the Bus or pet supplies for the Fairfax County Animal Shelter. For details, email [hannah.menchhoff@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:hannah.menchhoff@fairfaxcounty.gov).

## JAN. 31 TO FEB. 2

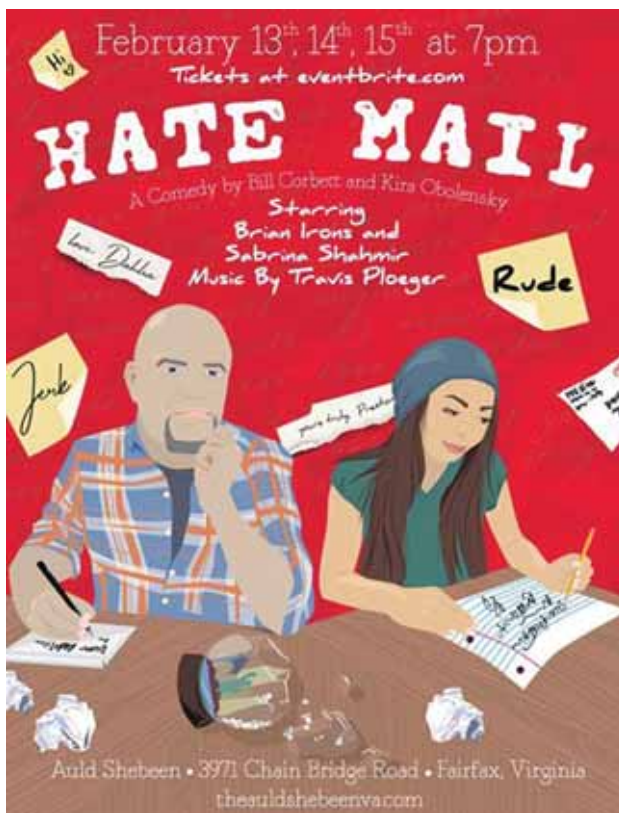
**PAW Patrol Live! "Race to the Rescue."** Fri. Jan. 31 - 6 p.m.; Sat. Feb. 1: 10 a.m., 2 p.m., 6 p.m.; Sun. Feb. 2: 10 a.m., 2 p.m. At GMU Eagle Bank Arena, Fairfax. PAW Patrol Live! "Race to the Rescue," is an action-packed, music-filled production. It's the day of the Great Adventure Bay Race but Mayor Goodway is nowhere to be

## "Hate Mail"

**"Hate Mail:" A comedic play at the Auld Shebeen on Feb. 13, 14, and 15.**

### FEB. 13, 14, 15

**"Hate Mail."** 7-8:30 p.m. At The Auld Shebeen, 3971 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax. A fast-paced, quick-witted comedic play about outrage, scandals, and falling in and out of love. Tickets on Eventbrite. Cost is \$20. Visit the website <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/hate-mail-a-comedy-play-tickets-90457752573>



## Lesson Zero

**Lesson Zero will perform at The Mixing Bowl on Feb. 15 in Springfield.**

### SATURDAY/FEB. 15

**Lesson Zero.** 8 p.m. At The Mixing Bowl (formerly J W and Friends), 6531 Backlick Road, Springfield. Music and dancing with Oasis recording artist Lesson Zero. Visit [www.youtube.com/lessonzero](http://www.youtube.com/lessonzero) or [www.reverbnation.com/lessonzero](http://www.reverbnation.com/lessonzero) for more information.

found. PAW Patrol to the rescue. Tickets start at \$21.50 (inclusive of facility fee) and are available at the EagleBank Box Office or at [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com)

## JAN. 31-FEB. 1

**The Mason Cabaret in Concert.** Friday at 8 p.m.; Saturday at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. A perennial favorite, the Musical Theater ambassadors, the Mason Cabaret, return with a fresh line-up of stellar vocalists offering showstoppers, ballads and duets, delving into the music of George Gershwin, Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Duke Ellington, Harold Arlen, and many more. This "Fun-raiser" supports the Musical Theater program at Mason and will have you dancing in your seats and humming all the way home. Tickets are \$30 General Public; \$15 students, staff, seniors and groups. Visit the website: <https://cfa.gmu.edu/>

## JAN. 31 TO FEB. 29

**Fairfax City Golden Ticket.** 12 p.m. Fairfax City's Economic Development Authority has partnered with the Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce to host the 2nd Annual Fairfax City Golden Ticket contest in support of the 2020 Chocolate Lovers Festival. The Fairfax City Golden Ticket Contest features three golden tickets hidden within 1,200 chocolate bars made by local chocolatier Cameron's Coffee & Chocolates. The chocolate bars are available for purchase at participating Fairfax City businesses beginning Friday, Jan. 31 for \$3 each while supplies last. The contest offers three lucky winners who find the golden tickets a Chocolate Lovers gift basket featuring chocolate and items from participating Fairfax City businesses valued at \$200. To purchase a Golden Ticket chocolate bar, visit any of the businesses listed at [fairfaxcityconnected.com/goldenticket2020](http://fairfaxcityconnected.com/goldenticket2020).

## SATURDAY/FEB. 1

**Ping Pong Tournament.** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Clifton Town Hall, Clifton. The Clifton Betterment Association is sponsoring its Ping Pong Tournament. No fee to enter. All ages and levels of experience welcome. Register now <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0c4eaeaa2c7-pingpong2020>. Sign up in the appropriate category and they will provide brackets and times when they are ready. For more information, contact Lynne Strang [lbstrang@gmail.com](mailto:lbstrang@gmail.com)

**Multi-Level Remodeled Home Tour.** 12-4 p.m. At 6837 Corder Lane, Lorton. Learn how your neighbors are modifying their homes for a better quality of life. Bring family and friends together in a way that fits your lifestyle. Create open, private, and specialized spaces for all to visit comfortably. Presented by Sun Design, an Architectural Design-Build firm. Call 703-425-5588 or visit [www.SunDesignInc.com](http://www.SunDesignInc.com).

**Sip & Scotch Whisky Tasting Party.** 2-4 p.m. At Laurel Hill Golf Club, 8701 Laurel Crest Drive, Lorton. Laurel Hill Golf Club invites guests, 21 years and older, to kick off the new Sip Series; classes and events that mix art and history with food, wine and spirits. Hosted by scotch expert Debbie Waugh, taste and learn about four single malt scotch whiskeys from the four different Scottish regions along with Scottish food accompaniments. Cost per person is \$45. Events will be hosted in the clubhouse and require advance registration. Visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/golf/laurel-hill](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/golf/laurel-hill).

**Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company.** 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. In this world premiere, Mason Artist-in-Residence Bill T. Jones examines group identity and its relationship to aloneness set to spoken word and live music. What Problem? includes three thought-provoking sections: Jones in solo performance; Jones alongside members of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company; and, in conclusion, Jones and the company onstage with participants from the greater Northern Virginia community. For more than 35 years, the landmark Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company has revolutionized modern dance while exploring issues of identity through social commentary. Tickets are \$48, \$41, and \$29. Visit the website: <https://cfa.gmu.edu/>

## SUNDAY/FEB. 2

**Super Bowl Fun Day.** 1-4 p.m. At the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Come learn about train travel and sports at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum. Snacks and a craft will be provided and cost is included in the admission fee. Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$3; ages 13 and older, \$5; seniors 65 and older and retired or active military, \$4. Visit the website [www.fairfax-station.org](http://www.fairfax-station.org) or call 703-425-9225.

**T-Trak Model Train Show.** 1-4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Northern Virginia T-TRAK members will hold a N gauge Model Train Display. Admission: museum members, free; adults 13 and over, \$5; children 5-12, \$3; under 4, free. Seniors (65+ and military (active & retired), \$4. Call 703-425-9225. Visit the website [www.fairfax-station.org](http://www.fairfax-station.org).

## TUESDAY/FEB. 4

**Research Workshop Series.** 7 p.m. At Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Burke Centre Library will offer the first class of the year in their Research Workshop series. Learn tips and tricks on using Heritage Quest, an online research tool for historical and genealogical research available through the libraries. A limited number of laptops will be available during the workshop for hands-on practice with the resource.

## FEB. 4 THRU MARCH 2

**The Beauty of Wood.** At Artists' Undertaking Gallery, 309 Mill Street, Occoquan. The Artists' Undertaking Gallery presents "The Beauty of Wood". This exhibit features photography and digital paintings by David and Jane Ernst of Springfield, and wooden boxes by Jon Kaufman of Fairfax Station. A Meet the Artists Reception will be held on Saturday, Feb. 8, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The exhibit runs Feb. 4 through March 2. Contact the gallery at 703-494-0584 or at [info@artistsundertaking.com](mailto:info@artistsundertaking.com). Visit the website [www.artistsundertaking.com](http://www.artistsundertaking.com)



# Spanish Immersion Center

FROM PAGE 7

ers are warm, caring, dedicated professionals, and the safety and wellbeing of the children is our priority.”

In the preschool program, children are taught music, language arts, math, science and cursive writing – for fine, motor skills and so they’ll be able to write words in Spanish. In the Saturday program, they learn language arts, history, geography, some math and cursive writing. And, added Santamaria, “We also teach the children to listen to and respect each other.”

The Fairfax City location opened earlier this month; and during Saturday’s official grand opening, students sang a song in Spanish for the visitors, and parents, students and teachers mingled with each other and with the City officials attending the event. Among them was mom Mahtab Tehrani, whose son, Daniel, a sixth-grader, has taken classes at ChiCeLaCu! since second grade.

“He’s doing very well and is fluent in speaking and writing Spanish,” she said. “He started Spanish at a Montessori preschool and liked it. And because it’s a popular language in the U.S., we thought it would be valuable for him to learn it. I like this school because they speak only Spanish here, so the kids speak the language the whole time they’re here.”

Daniel attends afterschool classes, Tuesday and Thursday, for about 90 minutes each, plus three hours on Saturday mornings. “It’s a very good school, and this new location is very nice and spacious,” said Tehrani. “And Miss Maureen really does a lot for the children.”

Dad James Catto was there, too, with his twin daughters, Anya and Elena, 11, now in their sixth year with this school. “I speak Spanish,” he said. “I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Bolivia and served in the State Department’s Foreign Service in Mexico, so the girls spent three years there and learned Spanish. So when we moved back when they were 5-1/2, we wanted to continue their Spanish-language skills.”

Catto then did “tons of research” into schools, but he and his wife liked ChiCeLaCu! because “It offers a unique structure. It teaches both spoken and written fluency, with a strong emphasis on grammar. The kids use books they’d use in Spanish-speaking countries and are doing lessons as if they were native Spanish speakers. So they get a deep understanding of the language and grammar.”

“It’s really imprinted on them,” he continued. “And besides speaking, the students write, do research and have to give presentations. Plus, there’s a whole cultural component. The kids study both ancient and contemporary culture – including the foods,



(From left) are teacher volunteer Miriam Benavides, student Daniel Friedman and teacher Diana Cavanillas at the open house.

BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

dances, traditions, etc., of Spanish-speaking countries – so they also learn about the region and its people.”

Pleased with the school’s new location, Catto said it’s larger than its space in Vienna so there’s more room to differentiate between the students’ levels of learning. “And it’s near the park,” he added. “I love Fairfax, and we come here all the time, so I’m delighted that the school is here. And this larger space reflects the fact that the school is growing and doing well and shows all the hard work Maureen and the staff have put into it.”

**STUDENT DANIEL FRIEDMAN**, 11, has attended for five or six years. “They teach you Spanish in a fun way,” he said. “Instead of just lecturing, they give you lots of projects, like writing a five-page book in Spanish. It’s neat because it’s a common language and you could go to Mexico, Spain, Venezuela, etc., and talk to the people. I’d recommend this school to oth-

ers because there’s lots of hands-on learning, you learn Spanish and you get to be creative, at the same time.”

One of the teachers is Santamaria’s son, Braulio Mayorga Santamaria, who teaches world history and geography to first-through sixth-graders. “I love it,” he said. “The students and parents like me and are all genuinely interested in the class. They participate and have fun.”

“Speaking more than one language is a huge advantage in life,” he explained. “And once people learn Spanish, they can communicate and use it in their everyday lives. Our parents are extremely loyal, and I’ve seen progress in their children, learning to be their own people and speak fluently.”

Proud of what they’ve accomplished, Maureen Santamaria said her greatest satisfaction is seeing students who initially can’t read or speak Spanish become fluent. And, she added, “They’ll remember me, because you always remember a good teacher.”

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**NEWS**

**Gesher Jewish Day School Names New Head of School**

Gesher Jewish Day School Board of Trustees has selected Aviva Walls as Head of School with a starting date of July 1, 2020. The Board selected Ms. Walls from a pool of more than twenty qualified candidates after a nine-month search process advised by Prizmah: Center for Jewish Day Schools.

Walls is in her seventh year at the Shalhevet High School in Los Angeles, Calif. She started in 2013 as Director of College Counseling and Academic Guidance before taking over as the Dean of Academic Affairs.

In her current role, Walls serves on the Educational Leadership Team and coordinates with Department Chairs to meet the educational and resource needs of Shalhevet. Walls is part of a leadership team that also grew enrollment at Shalhevet from 160 students to over 260 in the past six years while maintaining the school's commitment to its vision and mission. Walls has also taught high school economics, and held leadership roles in the Undergraduate Admissions departments of New York University and Barnard College.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

**Aviva Walls**

"Aviva is a dedicated professional, and is excited to be a catalyst for Gesher to reach new heights as we move forward into the future," Phillip Blumenthal, President of the Board of Trustees for Gesher, said in a statement. "Aviva's visit to our community in December confirmed the unani-

mous view of her references that she possesses the leadership skills and commitment to the mission of Jewish day schools, to academic excellence, and to Jewish literacy to be an extremely successful Head of School at Gesher."

Walls received a Bachelor of Arts from Barnard College and a Master of Business Administration from New York University, Stern School of Business. She has also earned certificates from the Day School Leadership Training Institute at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and the YULEAD Yeshiva University's School Partnership emerging leaders program.

To learn more about Gesher Jewish Day School, or to schedule a tour of Preschool through eighth grade educational experience, visit [www.gesher-jds.org](http://www.gesher-jds.org).

**WEEK IN FAIRFAX**

**Stuff the Bus for Britepaths**

A Stuff the Bus food drive for Britepaths' food pantry will be held Saturday, Feb. 8, from 11 a.m.-4 p.m., at the Walmart at 11181 Lee Hwy. in Fairfax. Donations of nonperishable food items will help local families in need.

**Announcements**

**Announcements**

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# BULLETIN

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

## THURSDAY/JAN. 30

**Chairman McKay's Reception.** 5-7 p.m. At the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax. Join the new Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Jeff McKay, for the annual New Year Reception. Bring food donations for Stuff the Bus and pet supplies for the Fairfax County Animal Shelter.

## BURKE LAKE GOLF CENTER IN TOP 50

For the second year running, Burke Lake Golf Center's driving range was recognized as one of the Top 50 Public Ranges by Golf Range Magazine, a publication of the Golf Range Association of America (GRAA) and the Professional Golf Association (PGA). Each year GRAA recognizes the teaching professionals, public, private and stand-alone ranges whose achievements stood out. GRAA considers the number of range visitors, new social celebrations, events for women, marketing campaigns and available event space for private rentals. Noted in the recognition:

- ❖ Burke Lake Golf Academy's dedication to growing the game through programs for all player levels including juniors and women.
- ❖ LPGA Head Professional Kate Via's leadership role with the local chapter of LPGA Girls Golf and development of new classes and summer camps to attract new user groups to the facility.
- ❖ Burke Lake Golf Center's double-decker, fully renovated range featuring 64 lighted station driving range and 24 covered and heated stations, open year-round.

Visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/golf/burke-lake](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/golf/burke-lake).

## SUNDAY/FEB. 23

**Town Hall Meeting.** 1 p.m. At 8390 Laurel Crest Drive, Lorton. Sen. Scott Surovell and fellow legislators will host town halls throughout the 36th District in February. The legislators will discuss their legislative agendas and take questions from the audience. Some topics will include: Transportation, Education Funding and Reform, The State Budget and Tax Reform, Redistricting, Medicaid Expansion, Marriage Equality and LGBTQ Rights, Firearm Violence Prevention, Civil/Criminal Justice Reforms, Consumer Protection/Predatory Lending, Investing in Green Energy, Reproductive Choice Issues, Protecting Environmental Interests.

## NOVEC SCHOLARSHIPS

Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative and the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives are offering higher-education scholarships to public, private, and home-schooled high school seniors whose families receive electricity from electric cooperatives. Online applications at [novec.com](http://novec.com) for NOVEC's scholarships are due Sunday, March 15, 2020. VMDAEC applications are due Friday, Feb. 28, 2020. Students may apply to both organizations. The NOVEC Scholarship Program will award \$1,500 college scholarships to 11 qualified graduating public high school students in NOVEC's service territory in Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, Prince William and Stafford counties, and the City of Manassas Park. In addition, the overall outstanding student will receive the \$1,500 J. Manley Garber Scholarship, for a total of \$3,000 in college assistance. For more information about the NOVEC Scholarship Program, contact Ashley Arnold at [scholarships@novec.com](mailto:scholarships@novec.com).

## BRITEPATHS SEEKING VOLUNTEERS

Fairfax-based nonprofit Britepaths is seeking volunteers to sponsor families in need who live throughout the Fairfax County area. Sponsors are matched with families who have demonstrated need, and may opt to provide a December holiday meal and/or gifts for children under 18. Britepaths also has a great need for cash donations and gift cards to grocery stores or Target/Walmart to assist those who are not sponsored. A wonderful family, company or group holiday service project. Register and learn more at: [britepaths.org](http://britepaths.org). Contact 703-273-8829 or [sryan@britepaths.org](mailto:sryan@britepaths.org).

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## Can You Spell Thyroidectomy? (Or Ice Cream?)



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I couldn't before, Mr. Rogers, but now I can. And I even know what it means, which 10 days ago, in my neighborhood, I wouldn't have had a clue. Now, not only do I have a clue, I have a date for surgery: Jan. 27. Moreover, in addition to a date (and I don't mean my wife, Dina), I have a time and a place, a list of pre-surgical dos and don'ts, and a few items to buy: a post-surgical healing ointment and a special scrub to help minimize the risk of infection. And of course, I've been advised to wear loose-fitting clothing, perhaps a button down cardigan will do. If all goes well, I'll be home in my jammies around supper time when my recovery begins. Details of which are still a bit sketchy. I suppose I'll have to 'recover' to find out.

Let me amend that last sentence: I'll be on a soft-food diet for five days. What might not jump at you is that I don't eat many soft foods (M&Ms melting in one's mouth instead of their hands likely doesn't count). More significantly and quite out of my ordinary, my wife, Dina will be managing and controlling my menu. So far that menu includes eggs, pudding, apple sauce; all good but her last two items: spinach and kale, not good at all. I imagine I'll survive the surgery, but given how rarely Dina and have shared meals together over the years, I may not survive the recovery. And though her heart and head might be in the right place, I'm afraid my knife and fork won't be. During the best of times, I'm challenging to feed. After my surgery, I'm likely going to be at my worst. Although I certainly don't look it, food has always been the bane of my existence.

But at that post-surgical point, aren't I entitled? I mean, when I was a little boy and had my tonsils removed, I remember being given ice cream to eat - in bed. That had never happened before - or since, quite frankly. Soft foods. What's softer than ice cream? Why should I be deprived? I have two types of cancer. Yet so far, I don't see ice cream on the list. Maybe Dina's waiting for confirmation from the surgeon that cold foods are just as soft as hot. If true, I think I'm going to need that in ALL CAPS to convince my wife to give in to my indulgences. After all, one's thyroid gland isn't extracted every day so shouldn't I scream (perhaps whisper would be advisable) for ice cream? Wouldn't it soothe the savage beast that I might be after surgery? Presumably there will be some pain or discomfort and/or side effects from prescription medications I'm obliged to take so why not humor me; I like to laugh.

Except there's really nothing funny about surgery, other than the old joke: it's minor surgery when it's someone else, when it's me, it's major. So even though I've been told on relatively good authority that a thyroidectomy is not exactly major surgery, it's still me that's being anesthetized and operated on for four hours. And though I'd rather it would be somebody else, I don't see how that would help remove my thyroid gland which apparently has spread cancer to my neck and a lymph node. I guess if it has to come out, it might as well come out of me. And then we can get on to the business of learning whether I have one cancer or two and perhaps get an updated assessment of my life expectancy. If I had my druthers, I'd just as soon have only one cancer. Two is too much.

That being said/vented, right now, I just want to wake up after surgery and get home. And when I get there, either that night or for breakfast the next day, there better be a pint or two of ice cream with my name on it. I think it's only fair, don't you?

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



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