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Great Falls CONNECTION

Congregation members and Rev. Henry J. (Hank) Langknecht, who serves as pastor of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Great Falls gather in front of the church doors.



Celebrating 40 Years

WORSHIP, PAGE 3

Holiday Entertainment

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OPINION, PAGE 4 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 8

NOTICE OF WATER RATE AND BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

December 16, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

At 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 16, 2021, Fairfax Water will conduct a public hearing on its Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges. The hearing will be held in Fairfax Water's offices at 8570 Executive Park Avenue, Fairfax, VA.

The proposed changes, to be effective April 1, 2022, include the following:

- An increase in the Availability Charge from \$4,400 to \$4,510[†].
- A decrease in the Local Facilities Charge from \$19,610 to \$19,400.
- An increase in the Service Connection Charge from \$1,430 to \$1,480[†].
- An increase in the Account Charge from \$40 to \$41.
- An increase in the Quarterly Billing Service Charge from \$14.85 to \$14.95[†].
- An increase in the base Commodity Charge from \$3.33 to \$3.46 per 1,000 gallons of water.
- A decrease in the Peak Use Charge from \$3.90 to \$3.85.
- An increase in the Fees for Use of Fairfax Water Fire Hydrants to include the changes in the Commodity Charge and Peak Use Charge.
- An increase in the Overhead Charges for (Labor) from 102% to 103% and a decrease for (Materials) from 13% to 12%.

[†]Charges reflect fees associated with a standard 5/8" residential meter. Changes in charges for larger residential and commercial meters are reflected in the Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges.

Fairfax Water is also proposing a \$208 million budget for calendar year 2022*. Water sales are expected to provide \$180.1 million and the remaining \$27.9 million is expected from connection charges, investment income and other sources.

The major areas of operation and maintenance expense are:

-- \$1,000s --		
Category	2021	2022
Personal Services & Employee Benefits	\$58,379	\$63,585
Power and Utilities	10,597	10,795
Chemicals	7,637	8,688
Purchased Water	6,863	8,013
Supplies and Materials	4,984	5,272
Insurance	1,157	1,214
Fuel	680	753
Postage	585	618
Contractual Services	11,737	12,526
Professional Services	1,254	1,249
Other	2,243	2,740
Sub-Total	106,116	115,453
Transfer to Improvement Fund	(10,763)	(10,949)
Total	\$95,353	\$104,504

Net revenues are expected to be appropriated as follows:

Debt Payment	\$42,484,307
Improvement Fund	\$11,000,000
General Fund	\$47,922,000

*Fairfax Water's Board will continue to monitor economic factors and review revenues and expenditures at mid-year to determine if additional action is needed.

Visit fairfaxwater.org/rates to view a copy of the proposed changes.

Those wishing to speak at this hearing or desiring a copy of the proposed changes should call Ms. Karen Barnette at 703-289-6029.

Written comments to can be sent to PublicHearingComments@fairfaxwater.org or mail written comments to:

Fairfax Water
Public Hearing Comments
8570 Executive Park Avenue
Fairfax, VA 22031

All written comments must be received by close of business on Wednesday, December 15, 2021, to be included in the record of the public hearing.

Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling Announces Yearend Giving with a Matching Gift

As part of our year end fundraising, two members of the bicycling community have committed to matching the first \$5,000 raised for Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling.

Our two donors lauded FABB volunteers' work uniting government, local leaders, bike organizations and residents towards a common goal of making bicycling transportation safe, accessible, and commonplace in Fairfax County for all ages, abilities, and skill levels.

"Many employers offer a matching gift program to encourage charitable giving within their company. It's a great way to help spread the word about FABB's work and encourage others to support better bicycling," said Bruce Wright, FABB President.

This commitment will allow FABB to double the impact of the match with a one-time

gift or monthly gift commitment to turn \$5,000 in donations into \$10,000. Supporting FABB goes a long way to advance bicycling in Fairfax County, enabling the organization to hold more adult bicycle education classes, continue advocacy for better bike facilities, and better maintenance of those facilities, and so much more.

Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling is a community-led education and advocacy organization dedicated to improving transportation safety for everyone in Fairfax County. Since 2005, FABB has worked to improve conditions for bicyclists in Fairfax County, and independent localities within the county, to promote bicycling as a viable and safe means of transportation that is environmentally friendly, economically beneficial, healthful, and enjoyable.

Visit <https://fabb-bikes.org/donate/>

BULLETIN BOARD

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

SATURDAY/DEC. 4

Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser. 9:30-11 a.m. At 10609 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Turner Farmhouse Foundation invites the community to come to the Pancake Breakfast and Fundraiser. Come tour the grounds, visit the milk house and enjoy pancakes, coffee, tea and hot chocolate. Venture inside the farmhouse and

see how busy they have been during COVID. They are raising funds to work on the Retreat House, and will start construction since the Special Exception application was approved. Contact Sarah Kirk, skirkbtr@gmail.com, 703-403-3072.

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PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS



Congregation members and Rev. Henry J. (Hank) Langknecht, who serves as pastor of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Great Falls gather in front of the church doors.



Nick Spoto, 16, of Reston and his dad, also Nick, stand outside their church Christ the King Lutheran Church in Great Falls days after celebrating the 40th anniversary of its charter.

Christ the King Lutheran Church Celebrates

Pastor Hank and the congregation celebrate 40th anniversary of their charter.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Sunday before Thanksgiving, 2021 was “a good day,” according to Rev. Henry J. (Hank) Langknecht, who serves as pastor at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Great Falls, Va. Forty years earlier, another pastor, Thomas Dudley and his wife Elizabeth had been asked to start a Lutheran Congregation in Great Falls.

After determining interest, a charter was formed in late 1981, with approximately 100 adults and 75 children signing the roster. The church building was completed just over four years later, and the cornerstone was laid in September 1985.

On Sunday, Nov. 21, 2021 Christ the King Lutheran Church celebrated its 40th anniversary with two key events, a morning worship live and streamed at 11 a.m. and an anniversary concert live at 2:30 p.m. But the day was not what Langknecht and others had anticipated in the early spring of 2021 for the congregation of around 400 people.

“In the spring, we had high hopes that COVID restrictions would be lifted by November, allowing for a banquet and two or three worship services,” Langknecht said.

But by mid-September, with no imminent relief in the COVID status, Langknecht and two others explored ideas for the 40th anniversary celebration. Jane Cooper, a volunteer, and Derek Maseloff, director of music and organist, agreed their course of action would be to network with others and put together a plan for a “subdued but still celebratory day.” However, that, too, was not meant to be.

Plan C went into action. “Somewhere in October we decided we had to go low, low, key because of COVID,” Langknecht said. The trio came up with the idea of having a pie auction all morning. The congregation loves pie auctions, used as fund raisers for their youth programs.

“Generally, we have a wild group of people in the hall, bidding on pies, and it gets very fun and boisterous,” he said. People could bid on pies for their Thanksgiving dinners, but the bidding had to be done through a silent auction instead.

They would had a worship service with an Anniversary Declaration, a little hymn sing, and a birthday cake. “We would come back for the concert and then we would send people off with chili in a bag,” he said.

The homespun, daylong event went off without a hitch and was made more meaningful because, limited in scope, the congregation held tight to each moment and focused. One part made Langknecht’s heart cry happy tears he said.

“We had just under 100 people in worship at 11 o’clock. But even with masks, the singing was great. ... We closed the worship service by singing two of the congregation’s



The cornerstone of Christ the King Lutheran Church as laid just shy of four years after the charter was formed.

favorite hymns. One was the hymn, ‘We Are Called,’ and the last hymn was ‘Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee.’ I’d say that was definitely the highlight of the day, singing those two hymns.”

Congratulations and remarks poured in from former and current congregation members.

Marge and Glen Sjolblom of Richmond, former Great Falls residents and initial congregation members of 1981 wished Pastor

Hank and all the members of Christ the King a happy and blessed Thanksgiving on the 40th anniversary of the congregation. “Our family has fond memories of the loving fellowship over all these years, which are many and lasting. We pray God will bless your future.”

Jane Cooper of Vienna said that the part of the anniversary celebration that surprised her was the favorite hymn sing at the end. “I sing in the choir, and I had rehearsals for it, but I was surprised at how moved I was. We were singing to the congregation, and they were singing to us. We had our instrumentalists playing with us, and the whole sanctuary was filled with the Holy Spirit. I got choked up. I was feeling that joy of being with so many people again.”

Great Falls resident Karen Magley said she would not have missed it. “I didn’t bake a pie this year, but we bought a pie. The one that was in the picture on the front of the bulletin. It was an apple pie, and the crust had been turned into a picture of the front of the church. We took a lot of pictures and hated cutting into it. But it was a very good pie. Christina Wenks baked it.”

Nick Spoto, 16, of Reston said that when he returns to Christ the King Lutheran Church for its 80th anniversary in 40 years, he will tell his children about the 40th anniversary. “I will say, it was very raucous, but there were many good people here. And the pies were all very good at the auction. That was the main thing that I remembered.”

Budget Surplus in a Time of Need

DEL. KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM



A combination of an economy producing much more strongly than expected during the pandemic and a frugal state budget in anticipation of a revenue shortfall combined with several federal programs sending enormous amounts of cash to the states has resulted in Virginia having a strong cash position—possibly the greatest ever. Some choose to call the available cash a surplus, but I think a much more accurate term to describe it is an unappropriated balance. The amount involved is more than \$4 billion!

Using the term surplus implies to me that the needs of the state have been met and that there is money left over. As I indicated above, the existing state budget was put together with a very conservative estimate of tax revenue based on a contraction in the economy. Programs were minimally funded or needs were not addressed in order to ensure that the budget would be

balanced at the end of the year as constitutionally mandated. Likewise, the availability of cash flowing from the federal government has been much greater than ever before with an expectation that even more dollars will be coming to the states.

With the numerous challenges facing government in general it is reassuring that the availability of funding will not be as great an

issue as it has been in recent years. The list of unmet needs for those who view government's role broadly can be reduced by the available cash. For others, the availability of cash in government coffers raises the prospect of tax cuts. The incoming governor has indicated that he favors tax cuts. Virginia's tax rates are among the lowest in the country and should a policy of tax reductions be pursued it should be targeted to those with the lowest income.

Certainly tax revenues should never be allowed to exceed the wants and needs of citizens for government services. When there are dollars available the question becomes one of

giving monies back to citizens in the form of tax reductions or rebates or using it to provide needed services. Cutting taxes is an approach that is appealing to most politicians and is one that I think should be pursued when it can be done responsibly. In Virginia at this time I believe there are too many unmet needs to be doing anything in the budget other than providing funding for programs and services that have been needed but unfunded for years.

There is a waiting list estimated at over 12,000 individuals who qualify for assistance because of a developmental disability, but that list is reduced by only a few thousand persons per year with the need growing faster than programs or services to meet them.

There is a wide disparity of funding across jurisdictional lines for public education even though there is a composite index that is supposed to smooth out the differences. The lack of equity in funding among counties and cities is unjustifiable as are the differences across colleges and universities.

In coming columns I will be discussing other unmet needs. It is not possible to have a budget surplus when there is so much left to be done.

Children's & Teens' Connection 2021

Deadline extended, please send all submissions via email by Friday, Dec. 10, but earlier is better.

During December of each year, this newspaper devotes its pages to the creativity of local students and children. The results are always remarkable. It is a keepsake edition for many families.

We welcome contributions from public and private schools, art classes, families, individuals and homeschoolers. We publish every kind of artwork that can be submitted to us as a jpeg, poetry, essays, creative writing, opinion pieces, short stories, photography, photos of sculpture or gardens or other creative efforts.

Pandemic planning has made

for a short deadline, and, like everything else, the 2021 Children's Connections will be different than in the past.

For 2021, please send a curated collection of art from your class. We will do our best, but we are unlikely to be able to print every item submitted. Please include the first and last name of the student with each submission.

We ask that all submissions be digital so they can be sent through email. Writing should be submitted in .docx format or in google doc. If you are sharing a google doc with us, please turn on link sharing so that anyone with the link can

edit the document and share with kimm.mary@gmail.com. Artwork should be photographed or scanned and provided in jpeg format.

Some suggestions, but different ideas are welcome:

To be published, we must have the full first and last name of the student artist or writer.

Identify each piece of writing or art, including the student's full name, age, grade and town of residence, plus the name of the school, name of teacher and town of school location.

Home schoolers' contributions are welcomed.

Please send all submissions via

email by Friday, Dec. 10, 2021. The Children's & Teens' editions will publish on Dec. 15, 2021.

You can see the 2019 editions (pre-pandemic) by visiting www.connectionnewspapers.com/PDFs/ and scrolling down to Children's

Email submissions for the Children's Editions to kimm.mary@gmail.com.

For advertising information, email Debbie Funk at debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com.

For more, see <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2021/nov/17/childrens-teens-connection-2021/>

MARY KIMM

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

More Places To Give for Local Impact

Dear Editor:

I'd like to suggest more places to give for local impact

Please consider publishing a second list with these options

Thanks

Sara H.
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<https://fairfaxparkfoundation.org/>

Earth Sangha
native plant nursery
<https://www.earthsangha.org/>

Volunteer Fairfax
<https://www.volunteerfairfax.org/>

Lutheran Social Services
Afghan refugee resettlement
https://lssnca.org/take_action/afghan-allies.html

Afghanistan Youth Relief Foundation
Afghan refugee resettlement
<https://ayrf.org/>

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An independent, locally owned weekly newspaper delivered to homes and businesses.

Published by
Local Media Connection LLC

1606 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

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NEWS DEPARTMENT:
greatfalls@connectionnewspapers.com

Kemal Kurspahic
Editor ♦ 703-778-9414
kemal@connectionnewspapers.com

Mercia Hobson
Community Reporter
mhobson@connectionnewspapers.com

Ken Moore
Contributing Writer
kmoore@connectionnewspapers.com

ADVERTISING:
For advertising information
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Salome Howard-Gaibler
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Debbie Funk
Display Advertising/National Sales
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debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

David Griffin
Marketing Assistant
703-778-9431
dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com

Classified & Employment Advertising
703-778-9431

Editor & Publisher
Mary Kimm
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com
@MaryKimm

Executive Vice President
Jerry Vernon
703-549-0004
jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

Managing Editor
Kemal Kurspahic
Art/Design:
Laurence Foong, John Heinly, Ali Khaligh
Production Manager:
Geovani Flores

CIRCULATION
circulation@connectionnewspapers.com





If you welcome only people who are vaccinated to the event, be sure to say so up front in the evite or general email invitation, suggests Linda McKenna Gulyn, Ph.D.

Safe and Conflict-free Holiday Cheer

Celebrating the holidays with both vaccinated and unvaccinated friends and family.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

EGgnog, yule logs and champagne cocktails are making a reappearance this year as in-person holiday parties resume and virtual gatherings go into hiatus. Joining these celebrations might be guests who have not been fully vaccinated. Asking for proof of vaccination at the door does little to create a festive mood, but celebrating safely is a priority this season.

"There are several ways to enjoy holiday traditions and protect your health, said Kurt Larrick, assistant director, Arlington County Department of Human Services. "The best way to minimize COVID-19 risk and keep your family and friends safer is to get vaccinated if you're eligible."

From keeping a space well ventilated to holding celebrations outdoors if the weather permits, Larrick says that it is possible to maintain a semblance of safety at celebrations where there are some in attendance that have not been fully vaccinated.

Taking layered precautions provides an extra level of safety, said Lucy H. Caldwell, Director of Communications for the Fairfax County Health Department. "Including wearing a mask indoors when you're around those not in your household. ... Getting booster shots if appropriate and staying home if you're sick," added Caldwell.

Hosting smaller gatherings this year can also help minimize the risk of COVID-19.

"You might choose to wear a mask, regardless of the level of transmission, if a member of your household has a weakened immune system, is at increased risk for severe disease, or is unvaccinated," he said. "If you are gathering with a group of people from multiple households and potentially from different parts of the

country, you could consider additional precautions like taking COVID-19 tests ... in advance of gathering to further reduce risk."

Having conversations to discuss whether guests have been vaccinated can be fraught with apprehension and discomfort. "Establish contact with all guests in a general way, and say you are looking forward to them joining you for a holiday party, dinner, or open house," said Linda McKenna Gulyn, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology at Marymount University. "In that general invitation, like an Evite or group email, state something like, 'Sadly, we are not out of the woods yet. Everyone in our home is expected to be vaccinated.'"

Be clear about your decision and avoid defending or debating your stance on vaccinations. "Issue the invitation as soon as possible, giving people time to respond or at least consider your requirement," said Gulyn. "In other words, no last-minute battles."

"It's important to make sure unvaccinated friends or family don't feel like they have a scarlet letter on their chest," added Allyson Bohlke, LCSW, a Bethesda therapist who specializes in conflict resolution. "Show compassion. You don't want anyone to feel judged or shunned. Remember that they have the right to make their own choices and those choices should be respected."

Treating all guests as equals will help quell any dissonance between those who've been vaccinated and those who have not. "At an office party, for example, you can take everyone's temperature before they enter the venue," said Bohlke. "If it's

financially and logistically doable, you can give everyone a rapid test before they enter. Regardless of their vaccination status, asking those who are positive or have a temperature to leave is perfectly reasonable."

Include both vaccinated and unvaccinated guests in a brainstorming session to determine the best way to address the safety concerns, suggests McLean family therapist Angela Lott. "This is especially true for office parties. Ask attendees to offer suggestions on addressing the issues of those who are vaccinated and are uncomfortable around those who aren't, and vice-versa" she said. "It's easy to get a buy-in from all guests if they feel like they have some input into the decision."

"The best way to minimize COVID-19 risk and keep your family and friends safer is to get vaccinated if you're eligible."

—Kurt Larrick, assistant director,
Arlington County
Department of Human Services

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PHOTO BY RON GREEN

Cynthia Fox (center), of Alexandria, visits with members of Afghan refugee Javi and family at Quantico, bringing donations of clothing and other essentials.



PHOTO BY LINSEY WISE

A second sort of donations at Ramstein Air Base separated clothing by sex, age and size.

Northern Virginians Aid Afghan Evacuee Family

Support Crosses Three Continents.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

This is the story of one family's successful evacuation from Afghanistan to escape the brutal policies and actions of the Taliban. It's also the story of how groups of northern Virginia residents made the evacuation possible in the face of shrinking hope and rising danger, and how they helped one family start their journey to freedom and safety.

There are many Afghan families whose stories are similar to this family's and many neighbors who felt the call to help. Situated so close to the global seat of power that is Washington D.C., many residents in our area are among those involved in high profile events. What makes this story different is that local people took on the role that the government could not, making the ultimate difference in the lives of many who aided the U.S. in time of war.

MEET THE FOX-GREENS, both career Army veterans now residing in Alexandria. Ron Green served in Afghanistan in the 528th Special Operation Support Battalion from 2000-2003; his wife served in Kandahar in 2005-06. The Northern Virginia couple, together with others, organized a core group of veterans after a plea from friend and fellow veteran Thomas Koppen. Koppen's Afghan translator, Javid, who served in support of U.S. troops through 2017, had called seeking assistance. Javid's long period of application for a Special Immigrant Visa, begun in 2016, had not been finalized. Dangers and



PHOTO BY JON-PAUL DELANGE

Northern Virginian group organizer, veteran Ron Green (left), of Alexandria, stands with Afghan evacuee Javi on Quantico Marine Base after Javi's escape from Kabul with his family.

pressures were building in the final days of U.S. troop withdrawal. Javid was desperately worried for his safety and his family's.

The Special Immigrant Visa program is available to people who worked with the U.S. Armed Forces or under Chief of Mission authority as a translator or interpreter in Iraq or Afghanistan.

When Green's friends recognized there was no existing system within the State Department or Department of Defense that could coordinate with these allied families like Javid's, the veterans organized. They took on the task of getting the interpreter and his family out of danger. In what Fox described as a "spider web" of contacts, including those from her service in Kandahar Province and Kuwait, several groups connected



PHOTO BY COLBY WISE

Northern Virginians residing in Germany buy out the IKEA store inventory of blankets to contribute to evacuees arriving at Ramstein Air Base

to help each other in their mission, including some still on active duty in Afghanistan.

Communications in Afghanistan required encryption to avoid leading the Taliban to the hidden families.

Over several harrowing days and nights, the family, six girls under the age of ten, six women, and six men, reached the airport and were safely airlifted to Germany. Their escape included narrowly missing the suicide bombing at Kabul International Airport.

Javid's was not the only family aided by the group.

"Our efforts to date have successfully rescued 12 translators and their families. This is great news, but the work continues," according to the group's Go Fund Me. "There are many others our group is working on getting out of Afghanistan including interpreters who directly supported Special Op-

Give to Help Refugees

At a time of the year when many more area citizens will open their hearts to help others in need, these local charities are offering assistance to Afghan evacuees who must start again from nothing:

LUTHERAN SERVICES

National Capital Area,
www.lssnca.org

AFGHAN YOUTH RELIEF FOUNDATION

Chantilly,
www.aryl.org

CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Arlington,
www.cceda.net

HOMES NOT BORDERS

Washington D.C.,
www.homesnotborders.org

LOCAL VETERAN SPONSORED FUND

<https://gofund.me/b5cf1eb0>

erations, Medical Professionals, and workers who supported an Afghan Orphanage all of whom are in fear for their lives for working with US Forces. Many more still in harm's way, trying to get out of Afghanistan."

Read more at <https://gofund.me/b5cf1eb0>

MEANWHILE IN GERMANY, at U.S. Air Force, Ramstein Air Base, another northern Virginia couple, Colby and Linsey Wise were also heeding the call to help. The Wise family, formerly of Falls Church, had been in Germany for four years with Colby's company, providing Defense Department support. Ramstein Air Base was designated to receive evacuees airlifted from Kabul as a point of departure to the U.S. and other countries.

The Ramstein Air Base newsletter told of a

Northern Virginians Aid Afghan Evacuee Family

FROM PAGE 6

growing effort, “What started as a clothing and shoe drive turned into a large donation process to sustain the evacuee population from Afghanistan temporarily housed on Ramstein Air Base, Germany, during Operation Allies Welcome. ... The team received donations valued at \$1.3 million from local and international communities during the evacuation operations. The donation process began on the evening of Aug. 19, 2021, shortly after [the first] evacuees arrived at Ramstein. It dawned on us really quickly that we needed more space. Many of the donated items were not only from the Kaiserslautern Military Community, but they were from the United States, Belgium, France and other countries around the world. Volunteers collected more than 110 tons of donations.”

Linsey Wise described the donation center effort. “The first sort was general sorting (e.g., men’s clothes, kids shoes, baby food), the second sort was more specific (e.g., boys clothes size 2T, baby formula, women’s small pants). Once sorted, the donations went to a hardened shelter area on Ramstein AB where other volunteers pulled together clothing kits. These kits contained underwear, socks, pants, shirts, scarves, hats, coats, etc. and were handed out to evacuees once they got some essentials from the Red Cross. We tried to ensure that folks had a clean set of warm clothes right away since many people came with only the clothes on their backs.”

Linsey added, “Never have I felt the need to give back more than during ‘Operation Allies Welcome.’ Colby and I literally put our lives on pause [and hired babysitters] so we could volunteer, purchase essential items, and make purchases on behalf of friends, family, and coworkers back stateside. It was a very humbling and emotional experience, and I feel so lucky to have been a part of this effort and meet some amazing people along the way.”

Leaving Ramstein Air Base, Javid and his family were flown to Dulles International Airport, then transported to temporary housing at Quantico Marine Base. After many weeks, they are still at Quantico as they await completion of final processing for the assistance of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), part of the United Nations System, the leading



PHOTO BY JON-PAUL DELANGE

Cynthia Fox brings toys, books and stickers, which the girls particularly enjoyed, to Javid’s daughters, Sahar, 5 years old, Kawsar, 3 years old, and Hila 7 years old.



PHOTO BY LINSEY WISE

Three year old Jackson Wise helps pack and load jackets and other warm clothing donated by friends and neighbors of his family for evacuees traveling through Germany.

inter-governmental organization providing support for immigrants across the globe. IOM will assist the family in getting to Seattle, where they plan to settle near family members who have been in the U.S. for some time.

Meanwhile In Virginia, the Fox-Green group has continued to organize donations. Multiple visits to the evacuee family at Quantico included delivery of four truckloads of essentials from donors across Northern Virginia. Fox said that beyond clothing and shoes, they brought books to help entertain the girls and assist them in learning English. She commented that the family will once again be able to take only a limited amount of belongings with them on the final part of their journey as they fly to Seattle. Fox was complimentary of the work that charities such as Lutheran Social Services are doing to support refugees with transportation, housing, job assistance, mentoring, and other essential needs beyond what the small local group can manage. The Lutheran’s national capital group, with the help of 5,300 volunteers, has assisted 926 Afghan allies to date.

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HOLIDAY CALENDAR



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**1234 Ingleside Ave.
McLean, Va. 22101
mcleancenter.org**

McLean Community Center and AMS Planning & Research want to hear from community members like YOU as they work to establish the center's new strategic plan. When you take a few minutes to fill out the online Community Survey, you will be entered to win one of five \$60 vouchers that can be used toward any MCC-sponsored activity. Your response will be confidential.

To Participate:

Scan the QR code to the right with your smart-phone camera

or type the URL below into your web browser:

qrco.de/MCCsurvey



HOLIDAYS IN THE MOSAIC DISTRICT

At 2910 District Ave., Fairfax.
Santa at Mosaic -- Now Thru Dec. 23
Holiday Toy Drive -- Now Thru Dec. 13
Menorah Lighting -- Dec. 5 at 5 p.m.
Santa's Motorcade -- Dec. 17 at 5 p.m.

NOW THRU DEC. 19.

Holiday Lights on the Farm. Fridays thru Sundays 5:30 to 8 p.m. At Frying Pan Farm Park, 2739 West Ox Road, Herndon. What is "Holiday Lights on the Farm"? It's where you tour Frying Pan Farm Park in the safety and warmth of your car and see an amazing display of holiday decorations lighting up the 135-acre park. The cost is \$20 per private vehicle. Or you can take the tour on a tractor-drawn wagon ride with up to 20 of your family or friends for \$150 per group. Last year this event sold out, so get your tickets early at <https://bit.ly/FPLights>.

NOW THRU JAN. 2

Ice & Lights: The Winter Village at Cameron Run, 4001 Eisenhower Ave., Alexandria. Open nightly 5 to 10 p.m.; January 8 to February 27, 2022 (ice skating only), open Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Featuring an ice rink, multiple new holiday light displays perfect for Instagramming, a retail area, food, music and more. Admission: \$9 for general admission to Village; \$22 for village admission and skating; beginning January 8, \$14 for ice skating; free ages 2 and under. Visit novaparks.com/events/ice-lights

THURSDAY/DEC. 2

Chanukah on Ice. 6-8 p.m. At Pentagon Row (Outdoor Rink), 1201 South Joyce Street, Arlington. Lighting of a Giant 6-foot Menorah. Eat Dinner: Hot Latkes, Kosher Hot Dogs and Refreshments. Admission: Prepay by November 25th: \$10; After the 25th: \$13 Includes skate rental.

DEC. 3-5

"Enchanted Bookshop Christmas."

At Encore Stage & Studio, Gunston Arts Center - Theatre One, 2700 S. Lang St., Arlington. When an important holiday present disappears at the bookshop, it's up to our come-to-life book characters to solve the mystery of the missing bookmark and save the day — all without giving away their magical existence. Characters include the Nutcracker Prince, Amy March, the Velveteen Rabbit, the Little Match Girl, and even Ebenezer Scrooge himself. Tickets \$15 for Adults, \$12 for Children, Students, Military and Seniors. Concessions are available for pre-order. Tickets are available online at www.encore-stage.org.

DEC. 3, 4, 10, 11, 19

Mount Vernon by Candlelight. At George Washington's Mount Vernon, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Hwy., Mount Vernon. Take a candlelit guided tour and learn about holiday traditions in 18th-century Virginia. Visit with Mrs. Washington and other 18th-century residents of Mount Vernon in a 45-minute candlelit tour of the Mount Vernon estate, followed by a

reception. Hear stories of Christmases past from costumed character actors portraying Washington's family, friends, and enslaved or hired staff. Admission: \$36 for adults (ages 12 and up); \$28 for youth (ages 6-11); for members, \$26 for adults; \$18 for youth. Visit the website: mountvernon.org/candlelight

DEC. 3-19

"A Child's Christmas in Wales." Presented by the Vienna Department of Parks and Recreation and Vienna Theatre Company. From a story by Dylan Thomas and adapted to the stage by Jeremy Brooks and Adrian Mitchell. Dates: Fridays and Saturdays, Dec. 3, 4, 17, 18 at 7 p.m.; Sundays, Dec. 5 and 19 at 2 p.m.; and Saturday, Dec. 18 at 10 a.m. Visit the website: www.viennatheatrecompany.org.

DEC. 3-4

Scottish Christmas Walk Weekend and Parade. Taste of Scotland: Friday, December 3 at 6:30 p.m. Parade: Saturday, December 4, at 11 a.m. Campagna Center is thrilled to celebrate the 50th Anniversary Scottish Walk Weekend in Alexandria. In 1749, the City of Alexandria was established by Scottish merchants. Dozens of Scottish clans dressed in colorful tartans parade through the streets of Old Town, joined by pipe and drum bands from around the region, as well as terriers and hounds. The weekend kicks off with the Taste of

SEE HOLIDAY, PAGE 10

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CALENDAR

NOW THRU JAN. 2, 2022

LuminoCity Festival. 6-9 p.m. At Roer's Zoo-fari, 1228 Hunter Mill Road, Vienna. The LuminoCity Festival, immersive light display experience, unforgettably spectacular night of lights. The festival includes African, Asian, Arid, and Ancient-themed exhibits of spectacularly lit art displays set up in the zoo's walk-through area. www.roerszoofari.com.

NOW THRU DEC. 12

"Secret Things." Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road in Tysons. "Secret Things," a deep and heartfelt story of truth, discovery, and romance imbued both with gorgeous magical realism and fascinating true history of Sephardic Judaism in the American Southwest. General admission tickets are \$50. Senior (65+) tickets are \$47. Student, educator, and military tickets are \$15. Tickets can be purchased online at www.1ststage.org or by calling the 1st Stage box office at 703-854-1856.

NOW THRU DEC. 19.

Holiday Lights on the Farm. Fridays thru Sundays 5:30 to 8 p.m. At Frying Pan Farm Park, 2739 West Ox Road, Herndon. What is "Holiday Lights on the Farm"? It's where you tour Frying Pan Farm Park in the safety and warmth of your car and see an amazing display of holiday decorations lighting up the 135-acre park. The cost is \$20 per private vehicle. Or you can take the tour on a tractor-drawn wagon ride with up to 20 of your family or friends for \$150 per group. Last year this event sold out, so get your tickets early at <https://bit.ly/FPLights>.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 1

"Joy to the World: A Christmas Musical Journey." 7 p.m. At The Alden at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. A multi-genre recording artist and instrumentalist, Damien Sneed is a pianist, vocalist, organist, composer, conductor, arranger, producer and arts educator whose work spans multiple genres. "Joy To the World: A Christmas Musical Journey" will take the audience through Sneed's original arrangements of gospel, jazz and classical favorites. Tickets are \$30/\$20. Visit: www.aldentheatre.org.

DEC. 1, 4, 5

Play Auditions. Reston Community players are having auditions for "A Delightful Quarantine." Audition Dates: Wednesday, Dec. 1, 6:30-9:30 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 4, 3 - 6 p.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 5, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. with possible callbacks by invitation only. 266 Sunset Park Drive, Herndon. Advanced sign up via Signup Genius through link Reston Community Players' website is recommended, but walk-ins will be accepted too. Auditions will consist of cold readings from the script. Auditioning roles for all ages and ethnicities including two children's parts. Performances will be Feb. 25 through March 12, 2022 in Reston. Visit www.restoncommunityplayers.org.

THURSDAY/DEC. 2

A Magical Cirque Christmas. 7 p.m. At Capital One Hall, 7740 Capital One Tower Road, Tysons. Experience the enchantment of Christmas as Magical Hostess Lucy Darling takes you through an evening of dazzling performers and breathtaking cirque artists. Visit CapitalOneHall.com.

DEC. 2-FEB. 19

New Art Exhibits. At McLean Project for the Arts, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. MPA will open its two newest exhibitions on Dec. 2, 2021. Give and Take: Building Form (Emerson Gallery) will feature abstract wood sculpture by Emilie Benes Brzezinski, Rachel Rotenberg, Foon Sham, and Norma Schwartz, while the Atrium Gallery will feature Intersectional Painting: Works by Sheila Crider. Both exhibitions run through Feb. 19, 2022. Visit www.mpaart.org/ or call 703-790-1953 for gallery hours.



"Joy to the World: A Christmas Musical Journey" with Damien Sneed will be presented on Wednesday, Dec. 1 at The Alden at McLean Community Center in McLean.

FRIDAY/DEC. 3

Christmas: with Amy Grant & Michael W. Smith. 7 p.m. At Capital One Hall, 7740 Capital One Tower Road, Tysons. Ring in the holidays with Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith, Grammy winning Christian artists. They'll lift you into the spirit of the season. Visit CapitalOneHall.com.

DEC. 3-5

McLean Holiday Art & Crafts Festival. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Produced by MCC in conjunction with the Northern Virginia Handcrafters Guild, the juried show will be held Friday through Sunday, Dec. 3 through 5. Show hours are 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 3; 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 4; and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 5. Admission is \$5 and free for children ages 12 or younger. Features the work of 80 talented, juried, regional artisans. Products for sale include pottery, glass, jewelry, holiday decor, mixed media, fashion accessories, wood, fine art, artisanal foods and soaps. An onsite café will provide food and beverages during show hours. Visit www.mcleancenter.org/special-events.

DEC. 3-5

Tysons Library Book Sale. At Tysons Pimmit Regional Library, 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. Tysons Library Friends Quarterly Book and Media Sale. Dates: Friday, Dec. 3, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 4, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sunday, Dec. 5, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Half Price or \$10 per bag sale. Large selection of books and media for all ages and interests. 703-338-3307

DEC. 3-18

"A Child's Christmas in Wales." Presented by Vienna Theater Company, Vienna. This holiday season, experience a musical celebration of Welsh poet Dylan Thomas' iconic story, A Child's Christmas in Wales, the "never to be forgotten day at the end of the unremembered year," when songs are sung, cakes and sweets are abundant, and the frozen city parks are laden with mysteries and adventures for wild boys and girls to explore. Performance Dates and Times: 7 p.m.: Fridays and Saturdays: Dec 3, 4, 17, 18; 2 p.m. matinees: Sunday Dec 5, 19; and 10 a.m. matinee: Saturday, Dec 18. Tickets: \$15/\$10. Visit <http://www.viennatheatrecompany.org>.

DEC. 3-19

"Every Christmas Story Ever Told (And Then Some)." At NextStop Theatre, 269 Sunset Park Drive, Herndon. Santa Claus, Rudolph, the Grinch, and just about every other seasonal character you can think of make an appearance in this racy comedy that will have you laughing all the way to the New Year. <https://www.nextstoptheatre.org/>

SATURDAY/DEC. 4

Breakfast with Santa. 9 a.m. - 10 a.m. At Tysons Corner Center, McLean. Food Court, Level 3. Families can enjoy some personal

Here's What's Happening at MCC!

McLean Holiday Art & Crafts Festival



Friday, Dec. 3, 11 a.m.-7 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 4, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
Sunday, Dec. 5, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
\$5; free for kids ages 12 & under

Governing Board Meeting



Regular Monthly Meeting
Wednesday, Dec. 8, 6:30 p.m.

Presented by The Alden



"A Klezmer Hanukkah" with
Seth Kibel and the Kleztet
Saturday, Dec. 11, 7 p.m.
\$20/\$15 MCC district residents

Join the Lifesaving Cause



American Red Cross Blood Drive
Thursday, Dec. 17, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Donors of all ethnicities needed.

The Old Firehouse



Family Trivia Night (In-Person)
Friday, Dec. 17, 7-9 p.m.
\$5 per family of 4.
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The Old Firehouse



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HOLIDAY CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 8

Scotland Scotch Tasting on Friday evening in the Atrium Building. The parade will depart from St. Asaph St. heading north, head east from Queen St., head south from Fairfax St., and head west from King Street, ending right in front of City Hall. Admission: Free to view; \$75 registration fee to march in parade; \$200 and above for Taste of Scotland Scotch Tasting. Visit the website:

Campagnacenter.org

SATURDAY/DEC. 4

Holiday Festival at Torpedo Factory Art Center. 2 to 8 p.m. At Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. Torpedo Factory Art Center joins the fun on Alexandria's most festive weekend of the year. Santa and Mrs. Claus arrive by fire boat around 3:30 p.m. on the Waterfront. Music fills the halls and the waterfront, beckoning people to browse three floors of open artists' studios. Visit the website: torpedofactory.org

SATURDAY/DEC. 4

Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights. Old Town's historic waterfront will shine for the 21st annual Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights sponsored by Amazon. Parade begins at 5:30 p.m.; Dockside festivities 2 to 8 p.m. at Waterfront Park (1A Prince St.). Parade viewing areas along one mile of the Old Town Alexandria waterfront stretching from Founders Park (351 N. Union St.) to Ford's Landing Park (99 Franklin St.) Boat parade dockside festivities will entertain

parade-goers from 2 to 8 p.m. in Waterfront Park at the foot of King Street. Festivities include a pop-up beer garden from Port City Brewing Company. At 3:30 p.m., Santa and Mrs. Claus will arrive by fireboat at the Alexandria City Marina before attending the annual Torpedo Factory Art Center Holiday Festival. Admission: Free; \$ for food/drink and some activities Visit Alexandria-VA.com/boatparade.

SATURDAYS, DEC. 4, 11, 18

Holiday Market and Winter Village at The Parc in Tysons. At 8508 Leesburg Pike, Tysons. Save the date to purchase your holiday gifts from local artisans and small businesses.

DEC. 4-5

"The Nutcracker." 12 p.m. and 5 p.m. At The Rachel M. Schlesinger Center for Performing Arts NOVA Alexandria Campus, 4915 East Campus Drive, Alexandria. Enjoy this exciting Metropolitan School of the Arts production as Clara fights the evil Mouse Queen and her army of fierce mice to save the handsome and kind Nutcracker doll. On this great adventure, Clara will be transported to a fantastical land where she will meet the dazzling Snow Queen, dancing snowflakes, the Sugar Plum Fairy and many more wonderful characters. Visit the website: metropolitanarts.org

SUNDAY/DEC. 5

Living Nativity. 4-6 p.m. At Clifton Presbyterian Church, 12748 Richards Lane, Clifton. The Clifton Presbyterian Church and Clifton

Betterment Association invites the community to its Living Nativity. Park in town and walk to the church. CBA kids holiday gathering. Stop by the barn, after the live nativity scene at CPC, to see Santa and have some hot chocolate by the fire.

BEGINNING DEC. 5

Old Town Boutique District's Holiday Week. At various boutiques throughout Old Town Alexandria. Head into December with the first-ever OTBD holiday week, kicking off Sunday, December 5. Look out for a kick-off event at Hummingbird, tastings, trunk shows and doorbuster deals, and spend the holidays in the most magical place on earth. Visit oldtownboutiquedistrict.com

SUNDAY/DEC. 5

Town of Herndon's Holiday Arts & Craft Show. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At the Herndon Community Center, 814 Ferndale Ave., Herndon. Over 70 artisans and crafts people will exhibit and sell their handmade work at this annual arts and crafts show sponsored by the Herndon Parks and Recreation Department. Visit herndon-va.gov/recreation.

SUNDAY/DEC. 5

Community Menorah Lighting at Mosaic District. 5-7 p.m. At the Mosaic District in Fairfax. It's Chanukah time in the Mosaic District – and they're bringing the celebration to all those that join as they light the candles, sing songs,

SEE HOLIDAY, PAGE 11

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CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 9

time with Santa by enjoying the center's long-standing 'Breakfast with Santa' tradition. This must-attend event will feature a complimentary catered breakfast, kid entertainment, and a variety of family-friendly activities. <https://www.tysonscornercenter.com/Events/Details/558775>

SUNDAY/DEC. 5

Celebration of Lights. 3-6 p.m. At Great Falls Village Center Field, behind the Post Office. Featuring Santa and Mrs. Claus, a lighting of the Christmas Tree, a Live Nativity, pony rides, a petting zoo, school choirs and holiday treats.

SUNDAY/DEC. 5

"The Nutcracker." 2 p.m. At Capital One Hall, 7740 Capital One Tower Road, Tysons. The Ravel Dance Company will present the beloved holiday tradition The Nutcracker. With lavish costumes and magical dancing this production promises to be a joyous treat for ballet lovers of all ages. Visit CapitalOneHall.com.

DEC. 6, 13, 20

Take Photos of Your Pets with Santa. At Tysons Corner Center, McLean. Monday, Dec. 6, 6 – 8 p.m.; Monday, Dec. 13, 6 – 8 p.m.; Monday,

HOLIDAY CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 10

provide entertainment, spin the dreidel and more! This special event is done in conjunction with the JCC of Northern Virginia.

SUNDAY/DEC. 5

Inclusion Committee Chanukah Celebration. 2 p.m. At Temple Rodef Shalom Falls Church. Celebrate the Festival of Lights together! Enjoy making a Chanukah craft, hear a Chanukah story, share traditions, and enjoy some Chanukah music as we gather.

DEC. 10-11

Colonial Holiday Nights at Carlyle House. 5 to 8 p.m. At Carlyle House, 121 N. Fairfax St., Alexandria. Experience the holiday season with Carlyle House focusing on how the Carlyles and their enslaved workers observed the holidays during the 18th century. Stay tuned for updates about live music. Tours offered of the first floor with timed entry on the hour and half hour. Space is limited and reservations are required. All participants including those under the age of 5 must be registered. Visit novaparks.com

SATURDAY/DEC. 11

Civil War Christmas in Camp. 12 to 4 p.m. At Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site, 4301 W. Braddock Rd., Alexandria. Get in the holiday spirit with a patriotic Union Santa Claus, reenactors in winter camps celebrating the season, period decorations, soldier-led fort tours and kids' crafting activities. Visit the website: alexandriava.gov/fortward

SATURDAY/DEC. 11

"Klezmer Hanukkah" with Seth Kibel and the Kleztet. 7 p.m. McLean Community Center Hanukkah comes early this year, but Seth Kibel and the Kleztet keep the party going with festive Klezmer tunes and a little jazz thrown in. Chag Sameach!

SATURDAY/DEC. 11

Herndon Winter Market. 12 to 7 p.m. At 777 Lynn Street, front of Herndon Municipal Center, Herndon. A traditional German-style Christmas Market with a family focus supporting the Town of Herndon and surrounding communities. This is open and free to the public. Visit the website: www.herndonwintermarkt.com

DEC. 11, 12, 18, 19

Tall Ship Providence Christmas Story Time. At 12 p.m., 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. At Tall ship

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Dec. 20, 6 – 8 p.m. Fashion Court, Level 1. Bring your favorite pet in their holiday best for photos with Santa. This much-loved event has become a signature and well-attended theme night for Tysons Holiday.

TUESDAY/DEC. 7

A Charlie Brown Christmas Live. 7:30 p.m. At Capital One Hall, 7740 Capital One Tower Road, Tysons. Visit CapitalOneHall.com.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 8

Holiday Tea & Sweets. 12:30-2 p.m. At St. Mark Catholic Church, 9970 Vale Road, Vienna. The Holiday Tea & Sweets event is targeted to adults 55+. Delicious food provided by the Davis Career Center of Marshall High School. Entertainment provided by harpist, Jude Mollenhauer. \$10. Visit the website: www.scnova.org

SATURDAY/DEC. 11

"A Klezmer Hanukkah." 7 p.m. At The Alden at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Hanukkah comes early this year, but Seth Kibel and the Kleztet keep the party going with festive klezmer tunes with a little jazz thrown in. Features traditional klezmer music as well as jazz favorites. Tickets are \$20/\$15. Visit: www.aldentheatre.org.

Providence, 1 Cameron St., Alexandria. Come aboard the tall ship Providence for a special Christmas story time. This year's tale will be "The Christmas Ship," the true story of the schooner Rouse Simmons, the ship that for years supplied Christmas trees to the people of Chicago by making a dangerous winter crossing of Lake Michigan. This story is sure to delight young sailors ages 5 to 12. Check in at the Gazebo on the G-H Pier next to Founder's Park. Visit the website: tallshipprovidence.org

DEC. 17-18

Christmas Illuminations at Mount Vernon. 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. At George Washington's Mount Vernon, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Hwy., Mount Vernon. Kick off the holiday season with fireworks overlooking the Potomac River. Tour the Mansion to learn about holiday celebrations during Washington's time with live 18th-century music. See the lantern-lit historic area, the Mansion aglow in beautiful amber light, and the Upper Garden and Greenhouse dazzling in blue and lavender with moving wintry light patterns. Admission: \$60 adult/\$38 youth with mansion tour; \$58 adult/\$36 youth without mansion tour; for members, \$50 adult/\$28 youth with mansion tour; \$48 adult/\$26 youth without mansion tour. Visit mountvernon.org/illuminations

DEC. 17-18

Civil War Christmas at Carlyle House. 5 to 8 p.m. At Carlyle House, 121 N. Fairfax St., Alexandria. Discover how Christmas was celebrated when the Green family lived at Carlyle House and the Mansion House Hotel was being used as a Civil War hospital. Stay tuned for updates about live music. Tours offered of the first floor with timed entry on the hour and half hour. Space is limited and reservations are required. Visit the website: novaparks.com

FRIDAY/DEC. 17

Alexandria Symphony Orchestra Presents: Home for the Holidays. 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. At The Rachel M. Schlesinger Center for Performing Arts NOVA Alexandria Campus, 4915 East Campus Drive, Alexandria. This December, the ASO brings back the joy of live holiday music that audiences yearned for in 2020. ASO will accompany dancers from BalletNOVA with selections from Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker. Alexandria Choral Society joins the ASO for choruses from Händel's Messiah and will lead the audience in popular holiday carols. Visit the website: alexsym.org

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Not Getting Ahead of Myself



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

For the moment, I'm going to roll with the punch and not slip on any slope, real or imagined. The slope, metaphorically referred to, is my calcium level. A measure in my monthly lab work which needs to be normal-ish for me to continue receiving a bone-strengthening injection (Denosumab), a parallel treatment to my daily thyroid cancer medication. The reason I even have to get this shot is, you guessed it, it's a side effect of my thyroid cancer drug. In early Nov., and the following week's re-test, the calcium level remained abnormally low. As of this result, my monthly treatment has been delayed until early Dec. That means, I will have skipped a month of treatment; in my mind never a good thing. Whether skipping one dose like this could actually cause irreparable damage, I certainly don't know. But I have to admit, it worries the hell out of me, and at this late stage of my stage-IV cancer life; with a re-diagnosis to consider, I don't need anything else to worry about.

I mean, for all I know, the shot is actually working, and not receiving my every-four-week injection might put me at some kind of risk. The most significant risk being that if the calcium level does not improve, I might have to stop the treatment, or possibly, reduce the dosage of the pill I take for the thyroid cancer, a dosage which has been reduced twice already. This has always been a concern of my oncologist: the side effects of the treatment for side effects derailing the treatment for the underlying cancer. And generally speaking, untreated cancer doesn't usually resolve itself in the patient's favor. A side effect, in and of itself, is a problem, but more so the problem, its potential impact on your primary cancer treatment/protocol. I can't help but wonder if I'm, after nearly 13 years, finally heading down that dusty trail. However, I'm not going to go there yet, right?

Where I hope I'm going, as I've gone before, is the sweet spot, so to speak. The spot being where the dosage is high enough to combat the cancer but low enough to sustain one's quality of life. This has been a guiding tenet of my oncologist's treatment plan for me. He's always been sensitive to the demands of this patient on chemotherapy, and even on occasion, was not uncomfortable suggesting that I take a break from treatment and try to enjoy life while I felt good enough. I never took him up on the offer as I remained hopeful (and tried not to think too deeply about what he was inferring; that my life was going to be getting worse/more demanding and that ultimately, I would have to stop my treatment and eventually succumb to the disease. Instead, I just chose to continue the treatment and not think about the unpleasant possibilities).

Though this 'sweet-spot issue has only occurred recently, my concern of it happening has existed since my original diagnosis. I remember asking the oncologist about this medication-having-to-be-stopped issue at our original Team Lourie meeting in late Feb., 2009, he acknowledged the possibility. (As did I; remembering the circumstances surrounding my late mother-in-law's death from cancer.) I wouldn't say I've anticipated it, exactly, but I have been fearful of its inevitability. Nonetheless, until recently, it was hardly a blip on my radar; more like it was tucked away in a filing cabinet. Well, it's here now. And so are you regular readers.

No worries, really. This is life in the cancer whirled. Up and down and all around. Between office appointments, referrals, lab work, various scans, X-Rays, medicine/side effects, the sleepless nights and agonizing waits for results, unless you find a way, emotionally, to balance all the news, good or bad, the actual cancer is the least of your problems. Coping becomes the most of it.

I can't say any of it has been fun, but occasionally there's been a wry smile. Cancer is a very serious business. Contributing to its seriousness seems counter-productive. I've never been one to make a bad situation worse. And I'm certainly not going to start now.

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



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