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CONNECTION

Reston ♦ ^{Oak Hill} Herndon ♦ Chantilly ♦ CENTRE VIEW

PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION
OPINION, PAGE 4 ♦ WELLBEING, PAGE 5 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGES 8-12

Reston Parade Rings in The Season

PAGES 6 AND 7

The giant penguin
balloon, atypical
holiday fare.



Walkers
Honor Ruby

PAGE 3

Encore!

BACK PAGE

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:

Category	-- \$1,000s --	
	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 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.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NORMA KELLY

Krishna Gondi and Beth Flynn; their children and staff; Kathleen McMahon, executive vice president, Northern Virginia Family Services; Tina Bagapor, ZIPS vice president of marketing; and Fairfax County police help cut the ribbon on the new ZIPS Dry Cleaners in Centreville. At the ribbon (in center, from left) are Flynn, McMahon, Gondi and Bagapor.

ZIPS Dry Cleaners Opens in Centreville Square

ZIPS Dry Cleaners recently celebrated the grand opening of its new store at 14200-B Centreville Square in the Centreville Square Shopping Center. Enjoying the Nov. 13 festivities were franchise owner Krishna Gondi, wife Beth Flynn and their family. There to support them were Kathleen McMahon, executive vice president of Northern Virginia Family Services, plus members of the Fairfax County Police Department.

This new location offers the same, "in by 9, out by 5" service that ZIPS customers have come to expect. Gondi, a local pharmacist, took the entrepreneurial leap to open his first ZIPS Dry Cleaners in 2015. As a pre-

vious customer, he was impressed by the ZIPS business model and customer-centered focus. The Centreville

store is his fourth in the area.

During the grand opening, ZIPS accepted donations of new, adult or child-sized socks and underwear, as well as new, unwrapped toys to support Northern Virginia Family Services' clients. NVFS empowers individuals and families to improve their quality of life and promotes community cooperation and support in responding to family needs.

Founded in 1996, ZIPS Dry Cleaners is known for its same-day service, one-price business model. Today, there are 68 ZIPS stores in 10 states and Washington, D.C.

— BONNIE HOBBS

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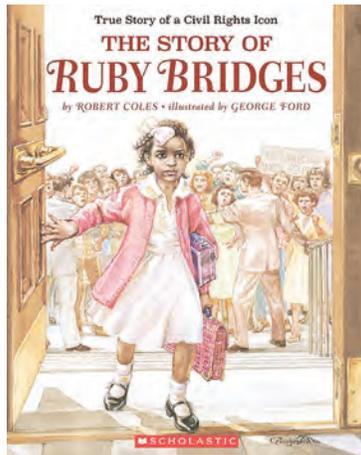
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PHOTO COURTESY OF KATHY CULLEITON

Children walking to Centreville Elementary in honor of Ruby Bridges



A book about Ruby Bridges.

Centreville Elementary Students Honor Ruby Bridges

Ruby Bridges was one of the first African American children to integrate an elementary school in America's Deep South. As a 6-year-old first-grader, she was the only black student to enter the all-white William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans. On Nov. 14, 1960, federal marshals escorted Ruby on her first day of school, where she was met by angry mobs.

Parents of white students boycotted the court-ordered integration and took their children out of the school. Many of the school's teachers walked out as well. Bridges was taught by a white teacher named Barbara Henry and was the only student in her class for the entire school year.

To commemorate Ruby Bridges, on Wednesday, Nov. 17, Centreville Elementary began its Walking Wednesdays. This event was started in 2018 by a group of fifth-grade students from San Mateo, Calif. They learned about Ruby and decided she deserved a special day.

Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day is a way for students to honor this young girl's courage. Her simple, but courageous, act of showing up for school each day played an important part in the Civil Rights Movement.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KATHY CULLEITON

Family members accompanying their children on the walk.

— BONNIE HOBBS

Herndon Holiday Model Train Show and Caboose Open House

On Saturday, Dec. 18, the Herndon Historical Society will hold its 15th annual Herndon Holiday Model Train Show at ArtSpace Herndon, 750 Center Street, Herndon, VA 20170). Free admission and will take place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Herndon's historic 1949 caboose will be open also on Dec. 18 for limited hours, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The caboose is located on Lynn Street, next to the Herndon Municipal Center.

SATURDAY, DEC. 18
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
ArtSpace Herndon – 750 Center Street
Free Admission
W&OD Caboose Open House, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Lynn Street

N-Scale Operating Layout by the Northern Virginia NTRAK.

Masks are Strongly Recommended for all Participants.

Hosted by the Herndon Historical Society and Arts Herndon

Contact: herndonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com



CONNECTION FILE PHOTO

From last year's holiday model train show



PHOTO BY KEVEN LEBLANC

German performers play bells at the Herndon WinterMarkt 2019.

Authentic European experiences for the whole family on Dec. 11

Herndon reintroduces its European-styled Holiday Market on Saturday, Dec. 11 with big festive changes. The Town of Herndon has a very special charm as a small historic farming community – especially during the holiday season. In 2019, it added a new holiday tradition, a quaint European-styled “WinterMarkt” right in the heart of town.

In its inaugural year, despite cold rain and mud, over 7,400 visitors came to the 8-hour event. The team held a virtual market in 2020 during the COVID hiatus to keep the spirit alive.

This year the Herndon Chamber of Commerce, joined by Platinum sponsor Northwest Federal Credit Union, Gold Sponsor Lidl, and other sponsors and volunteer organizers, have brought back the in-person event with several improvements to re-engage everyone on Dec. 11 from noon – 7 p.m.

This year's WinterMarkt will be held near the Herndon Municipal Center at 777 Lynn Street, with the steps as the focal stage. WinterMarkt will kick off with Herndon Mayor Sheila Olem and Head of Public Diplomacy of the German Embassy, Veronika Beutin.

“We are thankful that circumstances allow this beloved German Christmas tradition to take place once again in 2021, spreading cheer in a festive atmosphere and bringing family and friends together,” said Beutin. “This WinterMarkt will feel so much like home to me, and I look forward to meeting you all there.”

A full entertainment schedule of German music and dancing will take that stage throughout the day, along with high school

and college performers and local acting and singing troupes. There will be over 35 artisans from near and far to provide for every appetite, gift idea, and budget.

Andy Gallagher, local craftsman, and vendor said, “It was the best show I have ever done in terms of both sales and atmosphere.”

In addition to the expected German beers, culinary delights will also abound with waffles, stollen, glühwein (warm mulled wine), delicious Swiss raclette, smothered poutines, and popular grilled German sausages.

Santa Claus and Saint Nicklaus, joined by a life-size Nutcracker soldier, will roam the market throughout the day for pictures with children and will make a visit to the new Kinder Korner near the iconic Herndon caboose, where local authors will be reading children's holiday books. Stop by the new Herndon Community Television area to leave a video message of holiday wishes to be televised throughout the season.

“I love that we provide a community feel for the entire family,” said volunteer Marketing and PR Chair Keven LeBlanc. The integrated artisan, food, and entertainment with the inherent European stylings and small-town feel will provide a creative and delightful Christmas anticipation for all members of the family and visitors.

There is no cost to attend WinterMarkt, although food, beverages, and crafts are available for purchase.

Visit Herndon WinterMarkt Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/HerndonWinterMarkt> and website at <https://herndonwintermarkt.com/> for more information. *Fröhliche Weihnachten.*

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

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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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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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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.”

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The cold, blustery winds are a challenge the morning of the Reston Holiday Parade 2021, leaving participants tight reigning the balloons and equipment as they gather at the top of Market Street, waiting to make the half-mile walk.



From back row left, Dominic Majano, 14, Jonathan Hernandez, 14, Nathan Mikhail 14, William Campos, Ryan Seetaram, 14 and (front) Emma Majano earn the distinction of the first people to set up their viewing spot for the parade and stay there. Asked what gift she would be giving her mother this holiday season that does cost any money and cannot fit in a box, Emma said, "I'm going to help her bake cookies."



The Reston Town Center elves carry the Reston Holiday Parade banner joined by Reston Town Center's mascot dog, Resty, and Peppermint the Penguin.



Parade goers find the perfect spots to view the Reston Holiday Parade 2021.



Twenty-nine Years, the Reston Holiday Parade

VIEWPOINTS

"What are you thinking about this morning as the Reston Holiday Parade is about to start?"

One of the best holiday parades ushers in the season at Reston Town Center.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Since 1991, holiday season celebrations have begun at Reston Town Center on the Friday after Thanksgiving. The annual tradition of the Reston Holiday Parade returned on Friday, Nov. 26, hosted by Reston Town Center and Boston Properties Reston Town Center. Virtual in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 Parade celebrated its 30th year, bringing joy to families throughout Northern Virginia and beyond.

The annual procession showcased 29 units and over 500 participants marching, singing, dancing, and performing along Market Street and two grandstands. According to one of the emcees, Angie Goff, news anchor at FOX 5, WTTG Washington, this year's theme was Snow Much Fun.

"This being the season of hope and gratitude, it's excellent to get everyone together to celebrate the wonderful people that make our community a home,"

who made the event happen.

Goff offered a very special thanks to the parade sponsors, especially Community Partner Reston Community Center. "We have some huge, Macy's-style balloons in today's parade, thanks to them," Goff said.

Strong winds, however, eventually grounded the 18-foot snowman balloon, sponsored by the Reston Town Center Association. Goff noted that Hyatt Regency Reston helped with the parade staging area and Avant and Signature apartments in Reston Town Center also lent their support.

Andy Sigle of Reston sang the national anthem and the crowds, five and six deep, lined the curbs. "Ladies and gentlemen, children of all ages," Goff said. "Get ready for the sights and sounds of the annual Reston Holiday Parade because it is here."

USA Today nominated the Reston Holiday Parade as one of the best holiday parades. This year's voting ends this Monday, December 6, and anyone can vote online at USA TODAY 10Best Readers' Choice 2021 and find the list of BEST HOLIDAY PARADES 2021.

Goff said. She extended a thank you to the dedicated parade committee and more than 100 volunteers



The 2021 Grand Marshals of the Reston Holiday Parade, First Responders and Frontline Workers, including representatives from the Fairfax County Health Department, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue, Fairfax County Police Department, and the Fairfax County Sheriff's Office.



U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11) and his wife, Cathy "Smitty" Smith.



Standing under the Christmas tree is the perfect place to view the parade.



It's "Snow Much Fun" when the first of the trio of giant snowflake balloons make their way down the parade route.



The performance group Caporales San Simon Sucre celebrates Bolivian culture.



Conservatory Ballet of Reston



Members of the 501st Legion Inferno, an international STAR WARS costing organization.



Gottaswing Dancers kick up their heels to a holiday tune.



The award-winning South Lakes High School "Spirit of Reston" Marching Band plays their way down Market Street, announcing Santa and Mrs. Claus.



Vaneeza Shoaib, 18 of Burke, with members of the Lake Braddock Secondary School Key Club.

"Our challenge is holding down the snowflakes in the high winds and not having them blow away."



Juliet Campana-Boada, staff, Conservatory Ballet of Reston, stumbling as she tried to adjust her mouse head.

"I'm thinking that clearly, I've never been a mouse before. I can't see anything. ... This is so much fun."



Stephen Meza, 14 of Chantilly (bottom row left) with Santos Goetz, Dennis Meza, Stephen Meza, and Dannah Meza, 7.

"I'm looking forward to seeing the energy."



Fairfax County Sheriff Stacey Kincaid

"The Reston Holiday Parade is a wonderful event. We weren't able to be here last year, but certainly to be here to see so many people we haven't seen in such a long time and to celebrate each other as we go into the holiday season. ... If I could just bottle this day."



VA Delegate Ken Plum (D-36 District), representing all of Reston and parts of Herndon and Oakton in the Virginia General Assembly since 1982.

"I've walked this parade route every year, and I love it. The children are such a delight."



Fairfax County Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill).

"It's a blustery day but seeing all the holiday cheer really warms our hearts."

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.roerszooafari.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 in McLean.



"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.

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.

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.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 9

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CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 8

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

Tyson's 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 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, 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.

HOLIDAY CALENDAR

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



Encore Stage & Studio presents "Enchanted Bookshop Christmas" on Dec. 3-5 in Arlington.

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.encorestage.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

SEE HOLIDAY CALENDAR, PAGE 11

THE CONNECTION Alexandria Gazette Packet Mount Vernon Gazette Potomac ALMANAC

Children's & Teens' Connection 2021





During the last weeks 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. Even readers without children of that age spend time admiring and chuckling over the issue. The annual Children's Connection (including Children's Gazette and Children's Almanac) is a long-time tradition.

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Obituary



Phyllis Held, almost 100 years young, of Reston, Virginia and Kittery Point, Maine, passed away on Monday, November 15th, 2021.

Phyllis was a mother, matriarch, mentor, educator, lifelong learner, progressive thinker, friend, advisor and a really great cook. Her resilience, kindness and enthusiasm for life will live on as an inspiration for all who had the privilege to know her.

Phyllis was born on March 5, 1922 to Sarah and Herman Weinstein in Brooklyn, New York. She had one sister, Betty Levis. After high school, Phyllis went on to Brooklyn College and received a B.S. in Speech and Language in 1943. She then earned her M.S. in Education of the Deaf from Columbia University in 1944.

Phyllis married her best friend's brother, Martin Held, in January of 1946. They lived in Boston, Massachusetts, where they had 4 children: Jerry Held, Herb Held, Sara Held Nachazel and Nancy Held Herwig. In 1960 they moved to St. Louis, Missouri, and then to Reston, Virginia in 1967, where she lived until her passing.

Phyllis worked for Fairfax County Schools as a hard of hearing specialist from 1968 until 1980. After retirement, Phyllis continued her education through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at George Mason University, had lots of time with friends and family, and spent many months each year at her second home by the ocean in Kittery Point, Maine.

When asked "What's your secret to longevity?" Her answer was simple: be positive, take care of your body, and keep your mind active.

In addition to her children, Phyllis is survived by eight grandchildren, six great grandchildren and many nieces, nephews, great nieces, great nephews, and much loved "adopted" family.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the National Association of the Deaf <https://www.nad.org/donate/> or OLLI <https://olligmu.augusoft.net/index.cfm?method=Donation.MakeDonation>

Legals

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THE CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

HOLIDAY CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 11

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



The Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights will be held Saturday, Dec. 4 in Alexandria.

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, 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

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 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.; Docksides 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 docksides 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 AlexandriaVA.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

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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.



From left, Maddie Spiewak, Faith Chun, Caeley Duong, Becca Perron and Lola Farkas are among the dancers in Encore's upcoming Christmas show.



Rehearsing a number are Ryleigh Hoag, Anjali Ashok, Vilas Iyer, Ginny Shaw, Kelly Walsh, Sean Keim and Mimi Platenberg.



Striking a pose are (back row, from left) Kelly Walsh, Anjali Ashok, Zoe Zarnegar, Faith Chun and Lola Farkas, plus Becca Perron (in front).

'It'll Put the Audience in the Holiday Spirit'

Encore presents 'Christmas Is Just Around the Corner'

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION



Ryleigh Hoag and Allen McRea rehearse a scene.

The holiday season is here – time for mistletoe, twinkling lights and Chantilly-based Encore Theatrical Arts Project's song-and-dance extravaganza, "Christmas is Just Around the Corner." The show runs Saturday, Dec. 11 and 18, at noon and 3:30 p.m., and Sunday, Dec. 12 and 19, at 3:30 p.m., in the Richard Ernst Theater at NOVA's Annandale campus, 8333 Little River Turnpike.

Tickets are \$22-\$30 at www.Encore-tap.org. Call 703-222-5511 for group tickets and the Girl Scout special, including a behind-the-scenes tour, pre-show dance class and discounted tickets. The audience must wear masks.

The cast of 30 has been rehearsing since August and includes adult guest performers Allen McRae as a toy-shop owner and Lorraine Magee – who also wrote the script – as an ominous visitor.

"This show is so extra-special," said Director/Choreographer Raynor van der Merwe. "After not being in the theater for so long, we have such an appreciation to be able to be onstage again."

In the story, the residents of Centertown are known for their holiday celebrations. But when a new person comes there, they're not sure her intentions are honorable. So they have an undercover – although inexperienced – elf investigate her. Everything works out in the end, though, with help from San-

ta, more elves and the reindeer.

"This family-friendly show will appeal to all ages," said van der Merwe. "People will hear Christmas songs they know and ones they don't and will go on a journey in a story with a happy ending. And that's something we all need right now. It'll be uplifting and optimistic, with beautiful sets and costumes. It'll put the audience in the holiday spirit, and the songs and dance numbers will have people singing a cheerful tune as they leave."

Franklin Farm's Becca Perron plays Patti, the undercover elf from the North Pole. "She's new and slightly ditzy but has a positive attitude and is there to do her best," said Perron. "She originally worked in peppermint production, but it wasn't as prestigious as she thought it was, so she's excited about her new assignment and unaware of her shortcomings."

Loving her role, Perron said, "It's fun playing someone so ridiculously positive in any scenario." Her favorite song, which she sings with McRae, is "Our First Case," in which Patti is convincing him that she can do the job and, together, they can save Christmas in this small town.

"People haven't gone to theaters in quite

some time, and seeing this show is a great way to support our local theater community," said Perron. "For many years, we've been happy to bring this youthful, fun, Christmas spirit to Northern Virginia, and our excitement to perform this show has only grown. We can't wait to see audiences again and share with them all the holiday joy this show will bring."

Faith Chun portrays Dani, a teen girl who befriends Patti. "She's sassy, but mature, and likes to hang out at the coffee shop, talking with her friends," said Chun. "There are lots of things I can do with this character to make her lines funny and exciting."

She especially likes the 'Multiplying Santas' number because it's "unique, high-energy, fun to watch and joyful. And there's so much style in it, with different nuances within the dance and things to see at all times." She said the story grabs the audience's attention "because of how the characters are portrayed and how the dances go with it. And we're all so joyful to be back onstage that we're bringing lots of positive energy to this show and really bringing the Christmas spirit."

An Encore dancer since fourth grade, Chantilly High senior Vilas Iyer plays Phil, of North Pole Mission Control. "If anyone anywhere has an emergency, he's on it," said Iyer. "He receives requests and sends help. He's relaxed and doesn't panic; he knows mishaps happen, now and then, but the North Pole can take care of it. I like this role because, although there's a crisis, Phil's laid back and a calming influence."

Iyer's favorite song is "Happy Holidays," which opens the show. "It sets the tone for the entire production," he said. "It's energetic, rhythmically challenging and athletic. All the show's dances are so magical and fun to watch unfold onstage. The audience will ab-

olutely love them all."

Sean Keim, with Encore for 10 years, portrays Beanie, a barista in the coffee shop. "He's chill, but friendly, and can be sarcastic but easygoing," said Keim. "He interacts with the customers and has a run-in with the mysterious visitor. I'm excited to be able to not just dance, but also play a part – a full, rounded character. And I love Starbucks, so this role was made for me."

He especially likes the finale because "It's a grand production after the story's been resolved and we're all dancing happily. Each dance group is highlighted, and there are some fun lifts, turns and jumps that make it a fun and lively number." Keim said people will enjoy the characters' interactions with each other, whether speaking or dancing. "They really bring this show to life," he said. "They'll also love our special, blackout number and the snow falling onstage."

Chantilly senior Zoe Zarnegar plays Sally, director of the town's choir, which sings and dances a couple numbers. "She's a little bossy, but is just trying to do her job," said Zarnegar. "She makes everyone happy, while still getting things done. And she also sings with the choir as a senior member. I like playing her because I sing, too, and can relate to her. And I feel comfortable leading groups of people."

"Curtain Tap" is her favorite number because "We tap dance while wearing character slippers and pajamas, and you can only see us from the knees down. It's as if the characters of the slippers are dancing."

Overall, said Zarnegar, "There's a wide range of cast members, so it's fun to see that variety. Every scene is heartwarming and there's a lot of humor. And hopefully, this'll bring back the Christmas cheer we didn't have last year when everyone was stuck inside."