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CONNECTION

Burke ♦ Fairfax ♦ Springfield ♦ Fairfax Station

People roasting marshmallows for s'mores at a previous Fairfax holiday festival.

Holidays in Full Swing

FUN, PAGES 3, 10-15



Substitutes in Demand

NEWS, PAGE 2

Christmas Trees In Short Supply?

NEWS, PAGE 3

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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.

SCHOOLS



FCPS substitute teacher Ashley Salas leads a Fort Belvoir Elementary School classroom in a lesson.

Military Mom Saves the Day as a Substitute Teacher in Her Spare Time

Ashley Salas has a job already. The mother of two Fairfax County Public School students works as a photographer, doing shoots primarily on evenings and weekends. And still, she was drawn to becoming a regular substitute in her children’s school district.

Salas, a military spouse whose children attend Fort Belvoir Elementary School, says she found herself wondering how she could make use of her weekdays to help her community recover from the pandemic.

“During the day, when the kids are at school, I was like what can I do to help?” Salas said. “My brother and his wife are both teachers, I’ve seen how the pandemic has affected teachers. They need breaks too, they need to be able to attend medical appointments for themselves and their families.”

So Salas signed up to substitute teach at her children’s school in September. Since then, she’s typically in the building teaching multiple times a week -- she’s filled in for the art teacher, for individual grade classrooms, and even the librarian -- reading books to students.

She knows from the volume of requests she gets that there is a significant need for people like her -- interested, motivated, patient and caring individuals who may have some spare time during the week here and there. In FCPS, substitutes can designate what days of the week they are available, what roles they are comfortable filling, as well as which schools they would like to help.

“I’ve honestly started getting texts from teachers at the doctor’s office who need to schedule a follow-up exam, saying are you available three weeks from Thursday,” Salas said. “This is how significant the need is. Teachers are hesitating to schedule medical visits until they know they have someone to step in for them.”

Jamey Chianetta, principal of Fort Belvoir Elementary, agrees the need is significant.

“Day in and day out, our school has unfilled vacancies and we have to get creative,” Chianetta said. “Sometimes we pull other employees off assignments to lead a classroom, sometimes we split a group of students and send them into other classrooms. It has not been easy.”



FCPS substitute teacher Ashley Salas, a military spouse and freelance photographer, began substituting at Fort Belvoir ES this year when she became aware of the significant need for substitute teachers.

Some days the school is short one teacher, sometimes five or seven, Chianetta says, requiring her to reconfigure duties on a daily basis.

She praises Salas for her drive to help her community.

“She came in knowing not every day was going to be easy, but she doesn’t give up,” Chianetta said.

Salas has taken her commitment a step further. She posts on Facebook to military spouse groups encouraging other parents who have the time to get involved, leading a mini recruitment drive of her own.

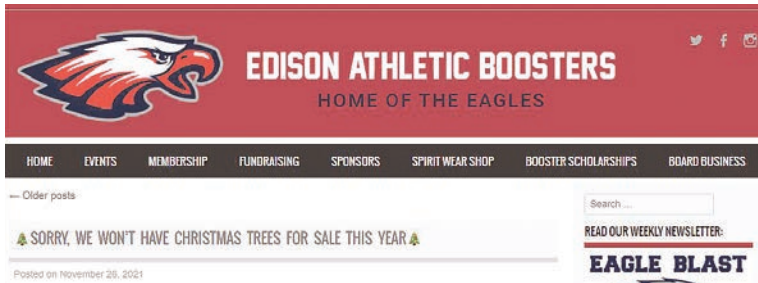
“I love that I teach where both of my kids go to school -- one is in fourth grade here, one is in sixth grade,” Salas said. “Honestly, gaining real relationships with other kids who go to school with my children and having them know I’m one other grown up in the building who cares about them and is there to support them means a lot to me.”

STORY AND PHOTOS PROVIDED BY FCPS

People interested in applying to be an FCPS substitute teacher must have 30 hours of undergraduate education coursework, provide a professional and personal reference, and clear a background check.

For more information on how to become an FCPS substitute, please visit the Substitute Teaching Opportunities webpage <https://www.fcps.edu/careers/career-opportunities/substitute-teaching-opportunities>

Fraser Firs in Short Supply this Season



The tree shortage is announced on the Edison High School Booster's website.

High school boosters are hit hard.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

The ominous signs out in front of area high schools this year seem a bit "grinchy," when it comes to holiday spirit but it's a sign of the times with the supply chain — shipping issues, fires out west and economic hardships.

"Due to a shortage of good fraser fir trees the boosters will not be having the annual tree sale this year," the sign out in front of Hay-

field Secondary School read. There was a similar sign up the street at Edison High School, and a few others around the county.

At Hayfield, Mary E. Allan is a booster parent, and she noted that since the pandemic hit, the Hawks Athletic Boosters have had to scale back on what they can provide to all the athletic programs. "The tree sale does have an impact but we have been doing our best to provide what we can to our athletic programs," Allan said.

Last year with all the COVID restrictions in place, there was no fundraising but since schools and activities are fully opened, the boosters at Hayfield are back working on fundraising efforts. "Our goal is to be able to provide financial assistance to all our pro-



This sign out in front of Hayfield Secondary School takes the place of the booster's tree stand out front.

grams so they can be safe and successful," Allan said.

Both Hayfield and Edison get their trees from Rorer's Produce which used to have a stand along Richmond Highway.

There are signs of the tree shortage elsewhere around the area too. At Nalls Produce in the south part of Fairfax County, they are stocked with some trees but also note the

shortage on their social media. "The tree shortage is no joke this year! But we are currently stocked with a good selection of Christmas trees," their post read.

Over at Burke Nursery, they had a good supply of fraser firs, but early on in the season, there were problems, said Erika, who manned the desk at Burke. "I know they were harder to get this year," she

said.

According to the American Christmas Tree Association, the extreme weather in the Pacific Northwest, and supply chain issues and shipping container shortages are part of the problem. This impacts live and artificial trees, and this will impact the cost too, they said. The fires out west this year could be a factor too.

Festive, Holiday Events in the City of Fairfax



People roasting marshmallows for s'mores at a previous holiday festival.

Live music, crafts, food and Christmas-tree lighting.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

The first two weekends in December will be holiday central in Fairfax City. Here what's happening:

Cathedral Brass Christmas Music

Featuring classical, jazz and popular-music favorites by Gabrieli, Harry Connick Jr., Vince Guaraldi, Karen Carpenter and more, the Cathedral Brass will present "Home for the Holidays," Friday, Dec. 3, at 8 p.m. The performance will be held in the Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Old Lee Hwy. in Fairfax.

Sponsoring this event is the City of Fairfax Commission on the Arts.

Festival of Lights and Carols

This annual event is set for Saturday, Dec. 4, from noon-6 p.m., in Old Town Square, 10415 North St. There'll be live, holiday music performed by several groups, plus s'mores and beverages. The Kiwanis Club will be serving hot apple cider, Air O'Dynamic Art will give out special balloons, and vendors will offer holiday crafts. The festivities will also include caroling and the lighting of the Christmas tree there at 5:30 p.m. Fair City Mall is the event sponsor.

Twins Ace Hardware 10th Anniversary

Founded by brothers Craig and Jeff Smith, Twins Ace Hardware at 10310B Main St. is an independently owned and operated store that's been in the heart of Fairfax City since 2011. And in celebra-



Innovation and business development: Nova Labs facilitates innovation by providing access to prototyping tools and a collaborative community eager to share expertise. In 2020, they opened the Innovation Center, which houses small businesses and entrepreneurs.



Nova Labs is a makers' community that never stops learning, sharing what they know with one another. From STEM to safety classes, arts, and beyond, children and adults challenge themselves.

Nova Labs: Reston's Loss, Fairfax City's Gain

New partnership promotes business and student career development.

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

Nova Labs is leaving Reston after ten years and will relocate to Fairfax City in early March 2022. The leadership of the nonprofit makerspace will open the doors of their newly purchased single tenancy space located at 3850 Jermentown Road, just off Route 50 and within one mile of I-66.

Nova Labs is the largest makerspace in the region, and is bringing all the tools from their current 18,000-square-foot space with them. They will leverage the use of their new 38,600-square-foot facility and the minds of their 500-plus makers to support innovation and community service throughout the region.

"So, we knew that we were going to have to leave," said Bradley Matthews, president of Nova Labs. "We have been on the hunt for a new home and looked in Reston, looked in Herndon, Chantilly, and others, but ultimately landed in the City of Fairfax."

Their current space as part of Isaac Newton Square in Reston will be demolished and replaced with 2.8 million square feet of new construction on the 32-acre site.

Since 2011, Nova Labs has attracted a large following throughout the region to use its Reston space and equipment, its laser cutters, wood tools, 3D printers, and more. You name it, Nova Labs has it for its membership along with a shared community of knowledge.

By relocating centrally to Fairfax City, rather than remaining on the county's northern edge, the nonprofit organization could be within reach of more of Fairfax County, offering more opportunities in education, community service, and youth programs to more members.

"But more importantly, was the partner-



Bradley Matthews, president of the Nova Labs board of directors

ship with the city," said Matthews. In 2020, Nova Labs opened its Innovation Center that hosts small businesses and entrepreneurs. That is what excited him. If someone had an idea, Nova Labs could help them develop it, evolve it, test it, and eventually turn it into a product.

"That's one of our big advantages when we do move to the City of Fairfax is we can take your idea and concept from just an invention to a business. And that's what we're looking to expand as we move into the city. We see it as a significant focus of our move," said Matthews.

According to Matthews, the Reston facility has 14 incubator spaces where people run their businesses out of Nova Lab space, up from five only two years ago. There are only 14 spaces because the individuals who already have a business take every closet, conference room, and open space and make them into small offices. "We still have a waiting list of nearly 20 people who want to come in and use the space," Matthews noted it is more than just a co-working space. The community, the access to prototyping tools,



Fairfax City Councilmember Jon R. Stehle Jr.

and the collaborative know-how make the Nova Lab's space a rare resource.

When Nova Labs moves to Fairfax, Matthews says they plan to quickly expand the number of offices to 20 and expand the program to assist members thinking about starting a business. They could be selling products on Etsy or creating one-off items to sell. Nova Labs plans to build an interim space that functions more like a rent-a-bench type of facility. Individuals might come in, rent a space with their specialized tools and materials for a fraction of the price of an office. They could use it to progress from a hobbyist to a pro hobbyist, to someone selling goods or gaining space to move into an office. "And, eventually, expand into a full-fledged business outside of our current location," said Matthews.

That is where the City of Fairfax comes into play, to further their businesses by leveraging the city's economic power, special programs, capabilities, and ancillary services. "So that's really what the partnership



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION
Blacksmithing at Nova Labs.



The soon-to-open Nova Labs Makerspace in Fairfax City is located off Route 50 within one mile of I-66. The site is opposite Katherine Johnson Middle School and features a concrete rooftop parking deck striped for 80 cars.

Libraries to Distribute Free COVID Test Kits

Fairfax County Public Library branches will become distribution sites for free COVID-19 rapid antigen at-home test kits as part of a pilot program beginning Dec. 3.

BinaxNOW COVID-19 Antigen Card Home Test kits will be available at each of Fairfax County Public Library's 13 open community branches and 8 regional branches.

Quantities are limited. Neither proof of residency nor a library card is required, and the kits are free of charge.

The test should be taken at home, not in a library branch, however, most branches provide a strong Wi-Fi signal in parking lots. If someone is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, please request kits via the library's contactless curbside pickup service. <https://research.fairfaxcounty.gov/unlimited>

Due to the recent surge in COVID-19 and low retail supply, there has been an increased demand for testing throughout the Commonwealth. Health officials hope that increased access to testing through key community partnerships with trusted agencies — such as libraries — will be helpful in stemming the spread of the virus. These at-home test kits are intended for diagnostic testing by community members so that they can know their status and get early care. Early action should help break transmission and further protect others.

The 13 community library branches are open Monday through Saturday, while the eight regional branch-

es are open seven days a week. Details about branch hours and locations are available on the library's website. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches>

Taking the Test

To take the test, individuals will need an internet connection, an internet-enabled device (computer, mobile phone, or tablet) with a webcam or front-facing camera, microphone, and speaker for the testing session, and a valid photo ID to show the eMed virtual guide. Information on supported browsers is available at this webpage. <https://www.emed.com/> Valid forms of ID include driver's license, passport, passport card, birth certificate, state-issued identification card, military ID card, and official school ID.

Once completed, rapid antigen tests provide results in 15 minutes. After the test taker completes the test online, eMed will automatically report the results to the Virginia Department of Health.

Individuals who test positive should isolate and follow up with their healthcare provider or the Fairfax County Health Department. The VDH Antigen Testing Recommendations webpage provides guidance on next steps following antigen test results. <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/get-the-facts/antigen-testing-recommendations/>

More information on this program is available here or by calling 1-877-829-4682. <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/protect-yourself/covid-19-testing/stacc/>

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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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Connection Newspapers welcomes views on any public issue. Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers; we will only print your name and town name. Letters are routinely edited for length, libel, grammar, good taste, civility and factual errors.

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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.
Oakton

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

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

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NEWS DEPARTMENT:
south@connectionnewspapers.com

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

Bonnie Hobbs
Community Reporter, 703-778-9415
bhobbs@connectionnewspapers.com

Mercia Hobson
Community Reporter
mhobson@connectionnewspapers.com

Mike Salmon
Contributing Writer
msalmon@connectionnewspapers.com

Ken Moore
Contributing Writer
kmoore@connectionnewspapers.com

ADVERTISING:
For advertising information

sales@connectionnewspapers.com
703-778-9431

Debbie Funk
Display Advertising/National Sales
703-778-9444
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 Manager:
Ann Oliver
circulation@connectionnewspapers.com





PHOTO COURTESY PATTY HELMS

Friends Patrick McCarthy, 15, South County HS; Lia McCarthy, 9, Landon Diaz, 10, and Andrew Helms, 9, all of Newington Forest ES; Hanna Helms, 12, South County Middle School, and her dog Ellie, 3, rose extra early on Friday, Nov. 19, to meet at 3:45 am and witness the lunar eclipse together.

Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling Has 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 double the impact of your gift. We hope 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 month-

ly 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/>

Northern Virginia Joint Transportation Meeting

Wednesday, December 15, 2021, 7 p.m.

<https://www.virginiadot.org/novatransportationmeeting>

You are invited to participate in a virtual joint public meeting held by the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI), Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA), Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) and Virginia Railway Express (VRE). According to Virginia Code, these organizations shall conduct a joint public meeting annually for the purposes of presenting to the public, and receiving public comments on, the transportation projects proposed and conducted by each entity in Planning District 8 (Northern Virginia).

The virtual meeting will begin with a brief presentation followed by a public comment period. During the presentation you can learn about various transportation initiatives, including:

- Virginia's Multimodal Project Pipeline Program
- NVTA's updates to TransAction and the FY2022-2027 Six Year Program; the NVTA Transportation Technology Strategic Plan; and the Regional Multi-Modal Mobility Program (RM3P) in partnership with the Commonwealth of Virginia
- NVTC's Commuter Choice program
- DRPT's funding opportunities, Six-Year Improvement Program and the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRRA)
- VRE project updates

The meeting will be held as a **virtual/online meeting**. Information for accessing and participating in the meeting will be posted at <https://www.virginiadot.org/novatransportationmeeting>. The team of VDOT, DRPT, OIPI, NVTA, NVTC and VRE representatives will make a presentation beginning at 7 p.m. highlighting their transportation programs, regional collaboration and receive public comments about Virginia's transportation network.

Give your comments during the joint meeting after the presentation concludes or submit your written comments by **January 7, 2022** by mail to Ms. Maria Sinner, Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030 or email meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov. Please reference "Northern Virginia Joint Transportation Meeting" in the subject line.

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact VDOT Civil Rights at 703-259-1775



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Tim Jones and Courtney Hauler work together to stun and survey fish and eels, using an electro-fisher unit.



Redbreast Sunfish and Bluegill were among the nine species of fish of all sizes netted during the survey



PHOTO IN PUBLIC DOMAIN



Justin Loyd nets benthic macroinvertebrates, such as this specimen in the Hydropsychidae family, as a measure of water quality and pollution level.

PHOTOS BY
SUSAN LAUME/
THE CONNECTION

Water Quality of Pohick Stream Monitored by State

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Employees of the Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality donned high waders to enter Pohick Creek on Nov. 30 as part of their water quality monitoring throughout the Commonwealth. The field survey measured stream habitat, and sampled fish and benthic macro invertebrate species living, there as an indicator of stream health.

Invertebrates, such as the caddisfly larvae pic-

tured, are common in the world's streams, and were netted, as were nine species of fish. Fish were stunned with a low charge of electricity for netting, then counted and released. Some species are known to be more tolerant of pollution than others, so an inventory of what is living in a stream can be a good indicator of water quality and stream health.

Results of this survey and others that make up the state's monitoring project will take several months to compile. Virginia has more than five million water quality observations in its database; the third largest nationally.



Jeff Tabot measures and calls out boulder depths as an indicator of stream habitat.

Nova Labs: Reston's Loss, Fairfax City's Gain

FROM PAGE 4

provides. The city has the power to bring in more of that focus on economic development to give that graduation path... to really have strong growth and new opportunities that wouldn't be available if they were anywhere but the City of Fairfax," said Matthews.

Fairfax City Councilmember Jon R. Stehle Jr. said he was looking forward to working with the Economic Development Authority to tee this up. "It goes back to the location they chose, which is across the street from Katherine Johnson Middle School," said Stehle. The opportunity to allow middle students to see the magic that happens and the companionship they can have as they figure out their vocations would transform lives. That is what had me so excited, why I worked multiple years with them to get



Nova Labs looks for ways to give back. During the early days of the pandemic, they manufactured high-quality, life-saving equipment for area hospitals and first responders.

them to the city. That location is special. It will unlock opportunities for future generations," Stehle said.



Nova Labs is a community hub for STEM youth education. It has hosted nine award-winning FIRST Robotics teams and created a K-12 MakerSchool with hands-on curriculum, after-school programs, and summer camps.

Stehle predicted that access to Nova Labs would be a game-changer because not every student goes directly to college or to

work in an office. Stehle said they have to celebrate the trades and innovation as they celebrate Division 1 full-ride scholarships to athletes.

"We have the opportunity to do that with this partnership," said Stehle. Nova Labs, he added, is more than access to a machine press or a blacksmith hammer. "It is the people who are sharing that. Such is in line with the City of Fairfax's mantra of 'Live Life Connected.'" I can't think of a better example of the connection than what is going to happen at NOVA labs on Germantown Road," Stehle said.

The move is a significant undertaking for the Nova Lab community. To lend a hand moving or donate to build-out expenses through a contribution to the 3.0 Capital Campaign visit Fairfax | NOVALabs <https://www.nova-labs.org/fairfax>

WWW.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."

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Festive, Holiday Events in the City of Fairfax

FROM PAGE 3

tion of its 10th anniversary, it'll host a three-day event from Friday, Dec. 3, through Sunday, Dec. 5, with a celebratory board cutting set for Saturday, Dec. 4, at noon.

The fun includes giveaways, special pricing, product demos, food tastings, children's activities and a special appearance by Santa Claus. In addition, throughout the weekend, customers will have the chance to win prizes from brands such as Craftsman, Weber and Milwaukee.

On Saturday, from 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Chef Jason Morse and Team Traeger will be grilling, there'll be a live deejay, goodie bags (while supplies last), Santa and an opportunity to win a Traeger Grill, with proceeds benefiting Children's National Medical Center.

City Police Collecting Toys

Between now and Dec. 12, people may drop off new, unwrapped toys, games, books and gifts to the Fairfax City Police Department to benefit children in the local community. Toy collection boxes are in the lobby of the station at 3730 Old Lee Hwy. in Fairfax.

Holiday Market

The fourth annual City of Fairfax Holiday Market will be held in Old Town Square, both weekends, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, from Dec. 3 through Dec. 12. (The trees there are already decorated in twinkling, holiday lights). A wide variety of craft vendors will sell their wares, including gourmet food, holiday décor, jewelry, pet treats, wood, personal-care and needlework items, with different vendors scheduled each weekend.

Dates and times for the Holiday Market are: Weekend One – Friday, Dec. 3, from 5-8 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 4, from noon-6 p.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 5, from noon-5 p.m. Weekend Two – Friday, Dec. 10, from 5-8 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 11, from noon-6 p.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 12, from noon-5 p.m.

The fun will include music, hot drinks and refreshments. And children and pets can have their pictures taken with Santa. The



Fairfax City Girl Scouts sing Christmas carols and Chanukah songs during a past Festival of Lights and Carols.

schedule is Sunday, Dec. 5, from 1-3 p.m., children/family photos; and Sunday, Dec. 12, from 3-5 p.m., pet photos.

The vendors are as follows:

❖ Weekend One

All That Yazz
Amaryllis Press
Bradshaw Sauce Co.
Cafeto Espresso
Colonial Kettle Corn
Doughboy Creamery
Early Bird Cheesecakes
Earth Essentials by Erica
Front Porch Art LLC
Goody Paws Bakery Treats
Gordon's Grill
I Spy Artisan Jewelry
Khadija Brand
Memo Designs
Nash's Fine Woodworking
Native Buffalo Spirit
Orange Peel Apparel LLC

Scrummy Gorgeous
Studio Ralla
Trinity Gifts
Tyson's Web Solutions LLC
Uniquely Sea Glass LLC
Vienna Volunteer Fire Department
Viva Sol – Café & Bake Shop
Ward of the Wood

❖ Weekend Two

Altyn Clark Stained Glass
Belle Jar Co.
Betty Jane's Sweet Delights Inc.
Castein Apothecary
Cindy's Special Gift
Circuit Breaker Labs
Colonial Kettle Corn
Fairfax Library Foundation
Fera's Loft
Green Papaya LLC
Paddingtons Backyard LLC
Raising Kane Design LLC
Samsara Upcycled Art & More LLC

Shiloh Church Artisans
Smell of Love Candles LLC
Stallard Road Farm & Botanicals
SweezEats LLC
TOKIYA JAPAN
Valley of Gems
Wanderlust Art by Sharon
Whole Grain Goods
Xtraordinary Evoked Photography

Lunch with Santa

Children will enjoy crafts, lunch and holiday characters in costume, Saturday, Dec. 11, at Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive. There'll be three seatings – at 11 a.m., noon and 1 p.m. Purchase tickets at City Hall, 10455 Armstrong St.; Green Acres, 4401 Sideburn Road and the Sherwood Center, 3740 Old Lee Hwy., or via <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/special-events/lunch-with-santa>.

CALENDAR

NOW THRU DEC. 11

Moe's Pop Up. 4-8 p.m. At Springfield Town Center, 6500 Springfield Mall, Springfield. Moe's Tavern Pop Up is a ticketed, family-friendly fan experience running for a limited time on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from Nov. 19 – Dec. 11. Adult tickets start at \$37; kids tickets are \$20. <https://moespopup.com/>

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 1

Jazz Combos & Steel Pan Ensemble Concert. 8 p.m. Performance by the Mason Jazz Combos, under the direction of jazz pianist Wade Beach; and the Steel Pan Ensemble, under the direction of Victor Provost.

DEC. 2-4

Used Book Sale. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. At Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce Street, Springfield. Thousands of used books at bargain prices. Many like new. Varied categories, all ages. Proceeds support library programming.

SATURDAY/DEC. 4

Living Nativity and Toy Drive. 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. At St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, 6320 Hanover Ave., Springfield. Living Nativity with costumed actors, live music, and live animals – the camel is back. The church is also accepting donations of unwrapped toys for distribution to needy children.

SUNDAY/DEC. 5

Mason Symphony and Choirs Holiday Concert. 7 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Join them for a joyous concert celebration by the Dewberry School of Music as we ring in the holiday season! Showcasing Mason's Symphony Orchestra and Choirs, this evening will feature holiday favorites and festive new works performed by extraordinary student artists. Cost: \$20 Adults, \$15 seniors, \$5 youth (through Grade 12).

DEC. 10-JAN. 23

"The Mystery of Edwin Drood. W-3 Theatre. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton.

SATURDAY/DEC. 11

Christmas Around the World. 4-8

p.m. At Parkwood Baptist Church, 8726 Braddock Road, Annandale. Celebration of Jesus Christ's birth. Holiday customs of several nations, reenactors in costumes, music, Biblical storytimes. Tickets online www.parkwood.org/registrations. Visit the website: <https://www.parkwood.org/registrations>

DEC. 11-12; 18-19

Holiday Dance Show. 12 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. At the Richard J. Ernst Theatre, 833 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. Encore Theatrical Arts Projects presents Christmas is Just Around the Corner, a Rockette/musical theater-style holiday Show. The people of tiny Centretown know how to celebrate the holidays and welcoming a new neighbor is an

added bonus. Or is it? Cost: \$22-\$30. Visit the website: www.ensemble-tap.org.

SUNDAY/DEC. 19

Create a Holiday Ornament. 1-4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Create a holiday ornament or package decoration of your very own. Supply fees are included with admission. One ornament or decoration per person while supplies last. Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$3; ages 13 and older, \$5, special events, \$6; seniors and military (active and retired) \$4. Visit www.fairfax-station.org.

Timeless and Enduring

“The Nutcracker” returns to Center for the Arts: live and with new glories.

BY DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

It's back and live. The joyful holiday classic “The Nutcracker” is posed to jump into hearts with Tchaikovsky's memorable score performed by the powerhouse Fairfax Symphony, with over 50 extraordinary Fairfax Ballet dancers filling the audience with joy and amazement.

This year's “The Nutcracker” will also be representative of Northern Virginia's demographic diversity. “I think what makes our ‘Nutcracker’ special is its diversity and the combination of talent on so many levels which is on display — from the youngest dancers making their first foray into ballet, to the highly skilled professionals. This is all wrapped up in a wonderfully colorful set and design,” said Christopher Zimmerman, FSO Conductor and Music Director.

“And then there's Tchaikovsky's music; and what music it is!” added Zimmerman. “A score so evocative, imaginative and multi-layered, not to mention a dazzling tour-de-force for all instruments of the orchestra, that, no matter how

Where and When:

Fairfax Symphony Orchestra and Fairfax Ballet present Tchaikovsky's “The Nutcracker” at Concert Hall, Center for the Arts, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax, VA. Performances Sat, Dec 18, 2021 at 4 p.m. and Sun, Dec 19, 2021 at 4 p.m. Tickets: \$49, \$69, \$89. For tickets to go www.gmu.cfa.edu or call 703.993.2787.

many times you hear it, it doesn't fail to bring out new depths of beauty and enchantment.”

“We're honored to join the Fairfax Symphony for our sixth annual production of ‘The Nutcracker,’” said Karla Petry, Executive Director, Fairfax Ballet.

Chantilly High School alum Andrea Cook, Artistic Director, Fairfax Ballet guides the technically rigorous choreography.

The featured role of Clara will be performed by Heather Qian, a junior at Oakton High School. “I look forward to being back on stage in front of an audience and being able to share my love for the story and dance with everyone.”

“There is something special about performing ‘The Nutcracker’ live with the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra; it feels like I'm part of

something much bigger, with two classical art forms coming together to create a unique experience,” added Qian.

Special soloists include American Ballet Theatre alumnus, Elina Miettinen to dance the role of Sugar Plum Fairy; Zachary Catazaro of the Cleveland Ballet to dance the role of Cavalier.

Carlos Martinez, George Mason University (GMU), dances the role of the Nutcracker Prince, and Philip Smith-Cobbis the role of Mouse King. Dareon Blowe, GMU, will perform the famous pas de deux “Coffee” dance with Nicole Shortle, senior, Oakton High School. The cast includes participants ranging from age 7 from Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William counties.

A memorable “The Nutcracker” is waiting to spark wonder; spectacular scenery, waltzing snowflakes, cool mice, a handsome prince, the Sugar Plum Fairy, and the perfect harmony of music and dance painting vivid images.

Health Note: Attendees, regardless of age, must be fully vaccinated (14 days since second shot of double-dose vaccine or 14 days since single-dose vaccine) against



COURTESY FAIRFAX SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND FAIRFAX BALLET

Heather Qian who will perform the role of Clara in the 2021 Fairfax Symphony and Fairfax Ballet production of “The Nutcracker.”

COVID-19 by the date of their visit and present proof of vaccination OR show a negative COVID-19 test result, upon entry into the venue.

Face coverings are required indoors for patrons ages two and up. Details at www.cfa.gmu.edu/plan-your-visit/vaccination-policy.

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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

The holiday season is here – time for mistletoe, twinkling lights and 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 Santa, more elves and the reindeer.



Ryleigh Hoag and Allen McRae rehearse a scene.

"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."

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, who attends Trinity Christian School in Fairfax, 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, 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 absolutely 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, black-light number and the snow falling onstage."

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 like 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."

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 Fry- ing Pan Farm Park, 2739 West Ox Road, Herndon. What is "Holiday Lights on the Farm"? It's where you tour Fry 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 Christ- mases 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 Scotland Scotch

SEE HOLIDAY CALENDAR, PAGE 14

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*Sunday's performance will not include BalletNova

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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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HOLIDAY CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 13

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

SEE HOLIDAY CALENDAR, PAGE 15

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HOLIDAY CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 14

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: alexandriavm.gov/fortward

SATURDAY/DEC. 11

"Klezmer Hanukkah" with Seth Kibel and the Klezmet. 7 p.m. McLean Community Center Hanukkah comes early this year, but Seth Kibel and the Klezmet 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 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

SATURDAY/DEC. 18

Caroling on Horseback. Town of Clifton. 1:15 p.m. Caroling and Procession. The route through Clifton will follow Main Street to Chapel Road, then Water Street to School Street and back to Main Street. Costumed judging and sharing refreshments will occur after the procession in the floodplain. Visit www.cliftonhorsesociety.org.

SATURDAY, DEC. 18

Herndon Holiday Model Train Show and Caboose Open House, 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 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. 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

SUNDAY/DEC. 19

Alexandria Symphony Orchestra Presents: Home for the Holidays. 3-5 p.m. At George Washington Masonic Memorial, 101 Callahan Dr., 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

FRIDAY/DEC. 24

Waterskiing Santa. 1 p.m. At Waterfront Park (1 King St. and 1A Prince St.), Alexandria City Marina (0 Cameron St.), Founders Park (351 N. Union St.) and Point Lumley Park (1 Duke St.) Gather along historic Alexandria's Potomac River waterfront for a spectacular show by Waterskiing Santa and his merry crew. Come early to see the pre-show (on jet skis). Visit waterskiingsanta.com

FRIDAY/DEC. 31

Olde Year's Day at Torpedo Factory Art Center. 1 to 5 p.m. At the Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. The whole family can celebrate the close of 2021 at Torpedo Factory Art Center. Find hands-on activities, meet artists working in their studios, and get inspired for 2022. Visit the website: torpedofactory.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 whirlwind. 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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