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Sara Holtz, left, and Supervisor Dalia Palchik (D-Providence) with blankets made by hand for Project Linus.

Project Linus Volunteers Spread Warmth

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Safe, Happy Holiday Entertaining

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NEWS



Nicole, Eric, and David are Project Linus volunteers from Oakton.



HealthWorks of Northern Virginia is a recipient of Project Linus blankets.



Herndon Elementary School is a recipient of Project Linus blankets.

PHOTOS BY CONTRIBUTED

Linus Had His Blanket, Now 1,300 Locals Have Theirs

A weft of comfort and warp of love bind the woven flannel.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Residents in Oakton's Miller Heights neighborhood who made the fleecy no-sew blankets for Project Linus never saw the child press the soft nap of the blanket against her cheeks.

Supervisor Dahlia Palchik (D-Providence) and her team never saw the teen wrapped in the blanket and cocooned in its warmth. And the returned Peace Corp volunteers never saw the young Afghan refugee finger the silky, loosely woven fabric of her new blanket.

But perhaps they and other Project Linus volunteers across Fairfax County, like Carine Newberry of Oakton, who knotted away making 85 blankets and counting, knew she was doing something to help children. Those who, as she said, for whatever reason, needed warmth and hugs more than she did.

"I thought about them with every knot, and I like to think that my blankets are a little bit warmer and fuzzier because of that," Newberry said.

Nearly a year ago, volunteer Sara Holtz of Oakton unexpectedly became the recipient of a substantial donation of fleece. "Like hundreds of pieces, thousands of pieces," she said. With a plan in mind, Holtz cut the fleece to the proper size for no-sew fleece blankets. She reached out to Annabelle



Sara Holtz, left, and Supervisor Dahlia Palchik (D-Providence)

Hammer, Reston Chapter Coordinator, Project Linus Fairfax County Chapter, Northern Virginia.

"Can we make blankets for you?" Holtz recalled asking.

According to Hammer, Project Linus <https://www.projectlinus.org/> is a national charitable organization that distributes new, handmade blankets, quilts, and afghans created by volunteers in the local community, or "blanketeers," through service opportunities. "As the head of one foster/adoption program told me, a child was amazed that a total stranger would take the time to hand-make a beautiful blanket," Hammer said.

Project Linus requires that all blankets be handmade of new material, washable, pin-



free, come from smoke-free environments, and free of chemicals, pet and animal hair.

At some point, a silky Project Linus tag is sewn to each blanket. Generally, finished items are delivered in bulk to designated "blanket transfer" locations. Finally, they are distributed to local needy or traumatized children ranging from newborn to eighteen years of age. Common sites include hospitals, clinics, foster-adoption agencies, crime victim units, and shelters.

According to Holtz, early in 2021, with the pandemic raging, she started contacting her Miller Heights neighbors in Oakton through Facebook and local Girl Scout troops, saying she had tons of fleece and asked who could help make blankets. "Next thing you know,

I'm putting bins at the front door, and people are coming and saying, 'I'll make ten, I'll make fifteen,' and they take them home," she said. Then, when they were done, they would bring the fleece blankets back to Holtz, and she would bag them up and give them to Project Linus.

As this was happening, more fleeces kept coming to Holtz's home, and she began sending them out in larger quantities to volunteers, including to teen Girl Scouts from Oakton, Reston, Herndon, Fairfax, and Great Falls. "People would say, 'I'll make 50, or my Girl Scout Troop will make 80. We had returned Peace Corp volunteers.' It just kept on going like that all year long," Holtz said.

Local groups that received blankets include Food Justice DMV, Healthworks for Northern Virginia, Inova Fairfax Hospital, The Nest Collective, Forestdale and Herndon elementary schools, The Salvation Army, Sleep in Heavenly Peace, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Arlington Migration and Refugee Services for Afghan refugees, Bailey's Crossroads Community Mutual Aid, Gracing Spaces, and Fairfax Circle Church.

No scrap of cloth goes to waste either. The smaller pieces left after Holtz cut the blankets; the Girl Scout troops used to make blankets for the animal shelter.

"There are a lot of good things going on in the world and around here, despite all the COVID, political disagreements, climate change, and all of that. We have some good things, at least bright, bright lights here and there, that we can focus on," Holtz said.

To learn more about Project Linus, visit ProjectLinus-About and FairfaxCounty.VA@projectlinus.net.

Budget Surplus in a Time of Need

DEL. KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM



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

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

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

With the numerous challenges facing government in general it is reassuring that the availability of funding will not be as great an issue as it has been in recent years. The list of unmet needs for those who view government's role broadly can be reduced by the available cash. For others, the availability of cash in government coffers raises the prospect of tax cuts. The incoming governor has indicated that he favors tax cuts. Virginia's tax rates are among the lowest in the country and should a policy of tax reductions be pursued it should be targeted to those with the lowest income.

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

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

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

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

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

Children's & Teens' Connection 2021

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

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

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

Pandemic planning has made

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

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

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

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

Some suggestions, but different ideas are welcome:

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

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

Home schoolers' contributions are welcomed.

Please send all submissions via

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

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

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

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

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

MARY KIMM
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

More Places To Give for Local Impact

Dear Editor:

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

Please consider publishing a second list with these options

Thanks

Sara H.
Oakton

Fairfax County Park Foundation
<https://fairfaxparkfoundation.org/>

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

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

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

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

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NEWS DEPARTMENT:
vienna@connectionnewspapers.com

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

Mercia Hobson
Community Reporter
mhobson@connectionnewspapers.com

Ken Moore
Contributing Writer
kmoore@connectionnewspapers.com

ADVERTISING:
For advertising information
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@connectionnewspapers.com



Rotary Award ‘Dignity of Work’

Milka Taherian has worked at the Safeway for 15 years where she says, “I know so many people after all this time; they are like my family or friends.” Her secret is listening to the customer with a smile and trying to help and make sure they are happy. Taherian was presented with this new Rotary quarterly award, Dignity of Work, that recognizes the workers of the community as “leaders not because of their job position but leaders by how great they are at what they do and how much they care about the work they do. This holds them up as examples to become leaders in the community.”

John McEville, the current President of the Rotary Club of McLean, says he came up with the idea of this award based on his own blue-collar background where he was raised on the north side of Chicago in a family of six kids.

“I started earning my own way starting at 10 years old delivering newspapers, and worked continuously for the next 63 years.”

McEville says he joined Rotary in 1994, and one of the things attracting him was the belief that by contributing our vocational talents we can help solve the problems of society and meet the needs of the community. “I finally had my chance when I became president of the McLean Rotary Club this past July and could direct my club to initiate a program that honors local people whose daily efforts where they work help make McLean a better place to live.”



PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION
Milka Taherian stands outside the McLean Safeway holding her Dignity of Work award presented by the Rotary Club of McLean at their regular October meeting.

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 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.

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Carlos Martinez as The Nutcracker Prince in the Fairfax Symphony and Fairfax Ballet production of "The Nutcracker."

PHOTOS COURTESY FAIRFAX SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND FAIRFAX BALLET COMPANY



Snow Scene from 2019 production of "The Nutcracker." Kellyn McNulty (left), Jessica Werfel (center) and Heather Qian (right)

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 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.



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

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



Waltzing Flowers from 2019 Fairfax Symphony and Fairfax Ballet production of "The Nutcracker."

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-Cobbs 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.

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.

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 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.

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.”

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

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

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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 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

SEE HOLIDAY, PAGE 10

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CALENDAR

NOW THRU JAN. 2, 2022

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



"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.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 11

Here's What's Happening at MCC!

McLean Holiday Art & Crafts Festival



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

Governing Board Meeting



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

Presented by The Alden



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

Join the Lifesaving Cause



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

The Old Firehouse



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



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Home of The Alden Theatre
www.aldentheatre.org

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

To Participate:

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phone camera

or type the URL below
into your web browser:

qrco.de/MCCsurvey



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HOLIDAY CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 8

residents of Mount Vernon in a 45-minute candlelit tour of the Mount Vernon estate, followed by a reception. Hear stories of Christmases past from costumed character actors portraying Washington's family, friends, and enslaved or hired staff. Admission: \$36 for adults (ages 12 and up); \$28 for youth (ages 6-11); for members, \$26 for adults; \$18 for youth. Visit the website: mountvernon.org/candlelight

DEC. 3-19

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

DEC. 3-4

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

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

SATURDAY/DEC. 4

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

SATURDAY/DEC. 4

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

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

SEE HOLIDAY, PAGE 11

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CALENDAR

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CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 9

Auditioning roles for all ages and ethnicities including two childrens' 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. Admission is \$5 and free for children ages 12 or younger. Features the work of 80 talented, juried, regional artisans. Products for sale include pottery, glass, jewelry, holiday decor, mixed media, fashion accessories, wood,

fine art, artisanal foods and soaps. An onsite café will provide food and beverages during show hours. Visit www.mcleancenter.org/special-events.

DEC. 3-5

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

DEC. 3-18

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

DEC. 3-19

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

SATURDAY/DEC. 4

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

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

HOLIDAY CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 10

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.

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Not Getting Ahead of Myself



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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