

# THE CONNECTION

CENTREVIEW ❖ Chantilly ❖ Great Falls ❖ Herndon ❖ McLean ❖ Oak Hill ❖ Oakton ❖ Reston ❖ Vienna

Scouts of BSA 1970, sponsored by United Christian Parish of Reston, learn the ropes of helium balloon handling.

## 'Tis The Season!

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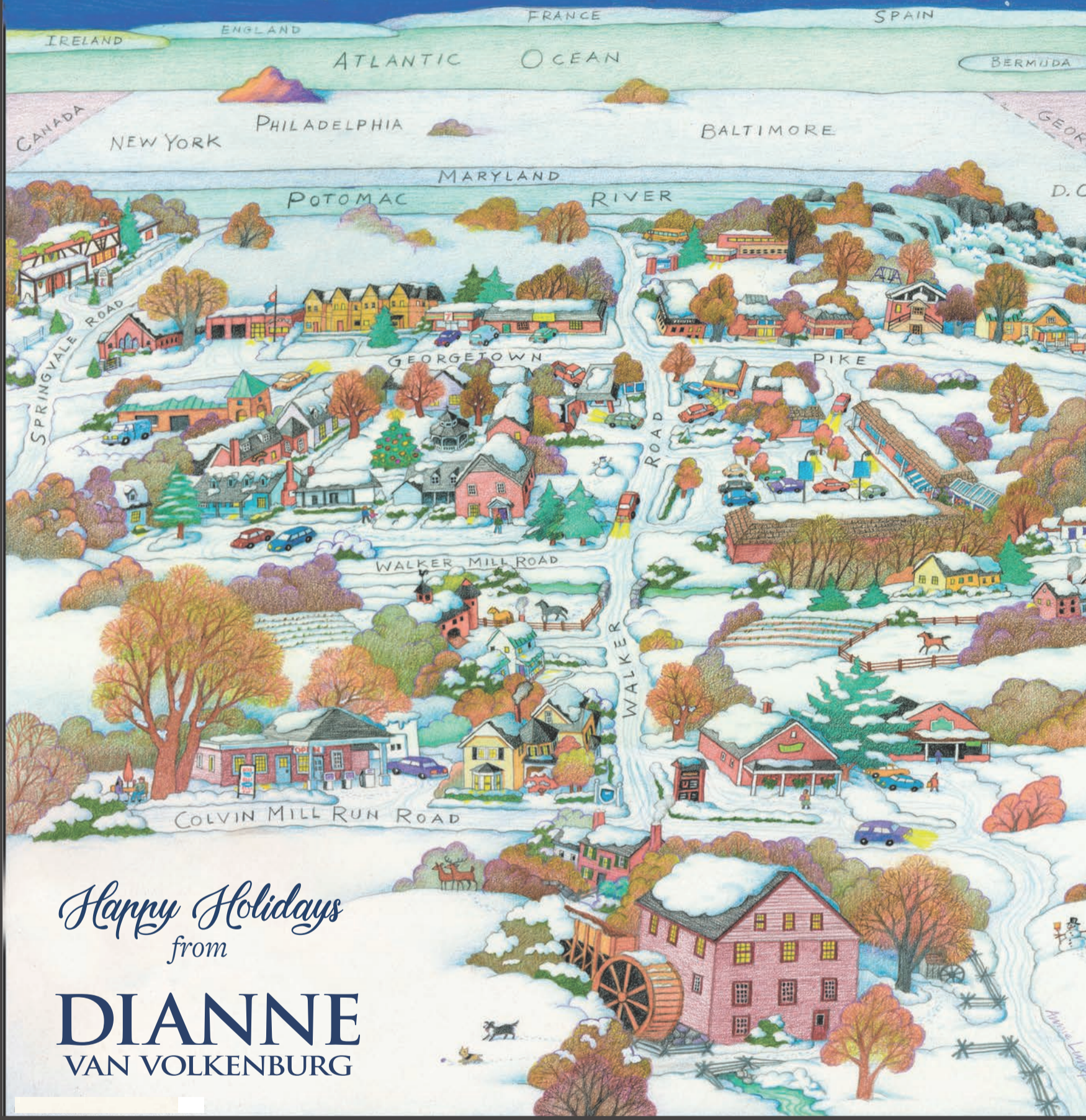
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NOVEMBER 29 - DECEMBER 5, 2023

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# NEWS

## Impact of Fairfax's High Rental Costs and Low Income

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

Part of an ongoing series.

**E**viction court is Friday in Fairfax County. Some county residents who are living on the edge cannot keep up with the area's high rental costs, given their low incomes and eviction proceedings are underway. It is causing immense stress for families and individuals and fractures their dreams.

In Fairfax County District Court, if the tenant does not comply with the 5-day non-payment notice, the landlord brings proof of the notice to the General District Court to obtain a Summons for Unlawful Detainer, which is a civil claim for eviction. The landlord and the tenant will appear in court.

Joe Fay, the executive director of the non-profit FACETS in Fairfax County, said that on the Friday morning before Thanksgiving, 319 cases were on the docket in Fairfax County Court for eviction. Most individuals who appear in landlord/tenant court do not have an attorney representing them, and the process can be confusing.

County residents are stuck in cycles of poverty with this year's elevated inflation and rising household debt.

"There are a few things that you have to pay for if you cut to the bone," Fay said on Tuesday, Nov. 21. "You need to eat, a place to sleep, and the power and water on. ... And there are other things if you are trying to work. You have to figure out child care, which has become a challenge. If you are on public transportation, you take the bus," he said.

FACETS is one of the "largest social safety nets for our most vulnerable and marginalized neighbors, providing emergency shelter, life-saving services, and assistance in securing housing for neighbors in need," according to its website.

In 2023, Fairfax County has 64.7 percent higher Fair Market Rents for 2-bedroom housing at \$1,838 than the average of Virginia at \$1,116, according Virginia Fair Market Rents, USHousingData.com. Virginia Fair Market Rents rated Fairfax County the most expensive jurisdiction to live in out of the 133 counties in Virginia.

"Thirty percent AMI [area median income] for a family of four in Fairfax County is \$45,200," Fay said. At the \$15 an hour minimum wage, that would be a yearly salary of around \$30,000. You will not rent a \$2,000-a-month apartment in the county," Fay said.

FACETS's programs offer basic needs assistance and comprehensive case management, along with an emergency pantry and a hot meals program for people who are experiencing homelessness. The organization's Changing Lives Campaign raises flexible funds to provide emergency response to people in need. This emergency financial assistance includes help with rent, utilities, medical bills, transportation, childcare, and

other urgent needs that can be a tipping point for a crisis that could push people into homelessness. During the winter, FACETS operates a hypothermia prevention and response program in partnership with Fairfax County and 34 faith communities.

On April 12, 2023, Leah Tenorio, Director of Hispanic Ministry and Community Outreach at Good Shepherd Catholic Church testified at the Fairfax County Budget Hearing about evictions and their heavy cost. Tenorio is in charge of the Emergency Assistance Program taking calls and walk-in requests mostly for rent and utilities. Tenorio was surprised at how many callers had court notices, eviction notices and/or unlawful detainers. She said that people who called for rent assistance were short \$150 on their rent and that they were issued a notice on day six of the month that they must appear in court. "They are being charged additional fines, fees and penalties – all of which we end up helping to pay – which takes away funds that could have helped another family," Tenorio said.

The collective noun "the homeless," is dehumanizing. It can create negative stereotypes and stigma. In day-to-day life, people, including policymakers and advocates, have used the word "homeless" as a noun for years. Instead use construction like "people without housing," states the newest Associated Press Stylebook. Other variations are "those struggling with homelessness" or "people experiencing homelessness."

So who are the people experiencing homelessness? Some are individuals and families who sleep on the couches of friends and family, saying it is just temporary. Other individuals experiencing homelessness may be sleeping in tents and vehicles. Living in automobiles parked in a public right-of-way is illegal, according to Fairfax County Police, adding another element of uncertainty.

There were 1,310 people experiencing homelessness in Fairfax County on a single night in January, according to the 2023 point-in-time count. There are limitations to a point-in-time count, though, as it cannot reach all people who are experiencing homelessness in the community.

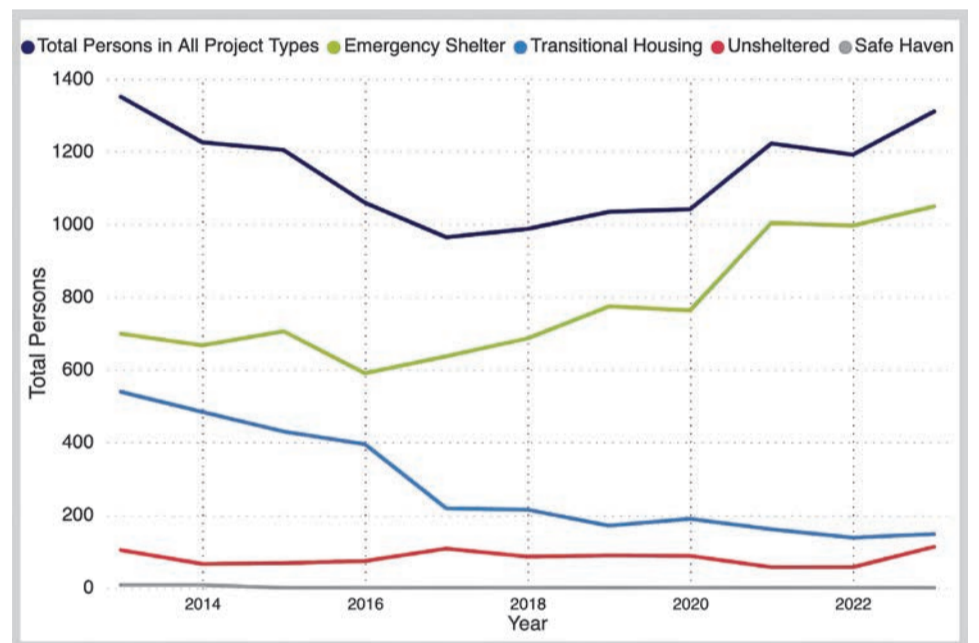
Officials in Seattle, Washington, released a report in December 2021 questioning the point-in-time counts claiming they undercount the number of people without housing in their area. Seattle officials developed



Staff at FACETS



LINKEDIN PHOTO  
Joe Fay



SCREENSHOT VIA FAIRFAX COUNTY

Point-in-Time Count - 2023, Office to Prevent and End Homelessness

Year	Total Persons in All Project Types	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Unsheltered	Safe Haven
2023	1310	1049	148	113	0
2022	1191	996	138	57	0
2021	1222	1004	161	57	0
2020	1041	763	190	88	0
2019	1034	774	171	89	0
2018	987	686	215	86	0
2017	964	637	219	108	0
2016	1059	590	395	74	0
2015	1204	706	430	68	0
2014	1225	667	484	66	8
2013	1350	699	539	104	8

SCREENSHOT FAIRFAX COUNTY

Point-in-Time Count - 2023, Office to Prevent and End Homelessness

what they believe is a more accurate way of counting individuals who are unhoused than the federal count. "Integrating data from systems beyond those focused on homeless response enables better estimates of homelessness," states the report.

Compared to the 11,700 people counted under the federal Point in Time Count method for one night in January, Seattle officials say they estimate more than 40,800 people experienced homelessness in Seattle "at some point in the year."



## SMALL BUSINESS

# Tale of Two Independent Bookstores

Shoppers support small business Saturday.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

**W**hen one shops at a small business, it helps the local economy and the environment. Interest in indie bookstores is thriving as small businesses, according to Statista 2023. After a decline during the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of independent bookstores in the United States will reach an all-time high in 2023 at 2,599, reports Statista.

Two of those indie bookstores are local and offer brick-and-mortar locations: A Thousand Stories in Herndon, which opened on Small Business Saturday 2022, and Fonts & Gifts in McLean, which welcomed shoppers on Small Business Saturday 2023 and will host its grand opening this week.

Michelle Ratto and Beth Luke are co-owners of A Thousand Stories. They celebrated their bookstore's first birthday with Small Business Saturday, 2023. "We are so grateful for our customers who pay attention to Small Business Saturday," Luke said. "Because it isn't

a thing until the customers say it is."

According to Luke, she and Ratto's vision of opening a bookstore and offering a handpicked selection of books or presents became a reality when a massive pallet of books arrived at 750 Center Street, and they began arranging them on the shelves. The legitimacy of a brick-and-mortar business, with a physical presence and face-to-face interaction, fosters trust with its service.

A Thousand Stories partners with Arts Herndon and is the town's only bookstore. The shop is located inside the 750 Center Street building and has become highly recognized in its first year for events, author book signings, storytimes, and other activities.

Like A Thousand Stories, Fonts Books & Gifts is McLean's only independent bookshop. Fonts & Gifts offers a handpicked collection of new books for all ages, gifts, journaling resources, candles, "dry" spirits and non-alcoholic beer, greeting cards, stickers, and more, according to store owner Amber Taylor,

"Many people tell us how excited they are that we are here and that the community has a bookstore and a place to gather as readers," Taylor said.

Asked about the name of her bookstore, Taylor explained that she and her daughter were discussing their favorite fonts when they came up with the name.

SEE SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESS, PAGE 5



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Amber Taylor, owner of Fonts & Gifts in McLean, recently opened the doors to her bookstore and welcomed shoppers on Small Business Saturday 2023. She will hold her Grand Opening this week.

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# One Juvenile Passenger Has Died

One of the juvenile passengers from the Nov. 20, 2023 crash on Pioneer Lane in McLean has died from injuries sustained in the crash, according to a police report on Nov. 27. Four of the juvenile occupants remain hospitalized. Other occupants have since been released from the hospital.

On Nov. 20, 2023, at 4:56 a.m., officers responded to a single-vehicle crash in the 2600 block of Pioneer Lane. Six of the seven juvenile occupants were taken to the hospital with injuries considered to be life-threatening.

Preliminarily, detectives determined the 17-year-old driver was traveling southbound in a 2003 Lincoln Aviator on Shreve Road at a high rate of speed. As he crested the top of a hill, he lost control of the vehicle and struck a tree near Pioneer Lane. The vehicle then spun, ejecting five of the teenagers from the vehicle. One teen was trapped and

was extricated from the vehicle. The five passengers ejected from the vehicle were not wearing seatbelts. All six passengers remain hospitalized with serious injuries.

Initially, the driver was arrested on scene for Driving Under the Influence. After consultation with the Office of the Fairfax Commonwealth's Attorney, he will not be charged today, and charges are pending as the investigation continues. Detectives believe speed and alcohol were factors in the crash.

Detectives from FCPD Crash Reconstruction Unit are continuing to investigate and working closely with the Office of the Fairfax Commonwealth's Attorney to determine when charges will be placed.

Detectives would like to speak to anyone who may have information about this case. Those with information are asked to please call our Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543.

# Support Small Business

FROM PAGE 4

A short time later, Taylor discovered a remark by early 20th-century editor Beatrice Warde, that fonts "are the clothes that words wear."

"Ahh, that's it, I thought," Taylor said. At 6262 Old Dominion Dr., Suite B in McLean, Taylor said that the Chesterbrook Plaza has undergone improvements and new stores are opening. "It was one of the places we looked at, and I'm glad we did."

On Small Business Saturday 2023, Taylor received many visitors, she said. Asked what's next, Taylor, who previously worked at an Arlington bookshop, revealed that she will expand into author readings and community events in January and February.

Taylor lauded her five-person staff, adding that they all read differently. As a result, diverse experiences add variation to the curated choices.

"We have a nice nonfiction section that we're still growing; lots and lots of fiction, mystery, and science fantasy — quite a bit of young adult books and something for children of all ages," she said.

As many as one million books are published each year, all available online. Taylor said coming into



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Donna Lawrence of Fairfax shopping with help from Beth Luke, co-owner of A Thousand Stories in Herndon, as the indie bookstore celebrates its first birthday. A Thousand Stories held its Grand Opening on Small Business Saturday, 2022.

a brick-and-mortar store like hers, where readers can trust the staff and buyers to pick out quality books, helps readers get what they're looking for.

"Often, they don't know what they want until they get in and discover something new," said Taylor. You can't do that online.

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FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

Artificial lighting contributes to light pollution dimming the visibility of the stars.



Protect the night sky: Residents can use fixtures with full cut-out, meaning light is not emitted above the bottom of the fixture.

# Protecting Dark Skies Around Observatory Park

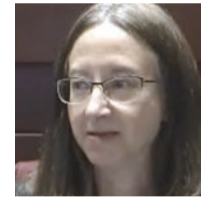
**Board of Supervisors passes zoning ordinance gently limiting lighting within half mile of Turner Farm Park Observatory.**

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

Among the board-approved action items on Nov. 21 was the Zoning Ordinance amendment regarding outdoor lighting around Turner Farm Park Observatory in Great Falls. As stated in Virginia Code §15.2-920, "In addition to any other authority granted to localities by law, any locality may by ordinance regulate outdoor lighting within an area one-half mile around planetariums, astronomical observatories,

and meteorological laboratories." Fairfax County staffer Carmen Bishop, of planning and zoning, said that the purpose of the outdoor lighting provisions in the zoning ordinance includes light pollution. But it is also to promote safety and security. "So, this amendment strikes a balanced approach," Carmen said. The amendment took effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following adoption. It applies to 525 parcels zoned low-density residential surrounding Turner Farm Park Observatory in Great Falls, which is located at the intersection of Georgetown Pike and Springvale

Road. There is another observatory on the George Mason University campus in Fairfax; however, the Zoning Ordinance does not apply to properties owned by the Commonwealth and utilized for Commonwealth purposes. The amendment allows legally existing lights to remain. This means there are no additional expenditures needed to comply with the amendment, according to Bishop. She explained that the amendment for the observatory area "modestly pulls back" on the current zoning ordinance standards. The amendment reduces the maximum



SCREENSHOT  
Carmen Bishop

brightness, or lumens, allowed for motion-activated lights on single-family properties to 1,500, in line with the maximum lumens allowed for other exempt light fixtures. "This is equal to one 100-watt incandescent bulb," Bishop said.

The amendment allows for flexibility while protecting the night skies. Any number or brightness of full cut-off lights is allowed, as is any number of unshielded motion-activated lights around doors and garages up to 1,500 lumens. Any type of light, such as landscape and decorative string lighting with a maximum brightness of 20 lumens, is allowed, as are any number of uplights or spotlights up to 300 lumens per fixture; 300 lumens is generally equivalent to 25-40 watts with an incandescent bulb.

OPINION

# Footprints on the Sands of Time

BY DEL. KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM

To paraphrase Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Lives of great persons all remind us, we can make our lives sublime, and, departing, leave behind us, footprints on the sands of time." Maybe it's the contemplations of my impending retirement or maybe it is because of the richness of the life I have been privileged to live that I have become

more aware of and more impressed by the women and men I meet in my community and in the political arena. Certainly there are "bad actors" in all realms of life, but we need to be wary of focusing on someone who does something criminal or unethical so that we do not generalize those actions to describe the whole of humankind. I am a politician by choice and am very proud to be in that kind of profession and service. For everyone who can cite for me a politician or someone in

the government that has broken a law or has done something unsavory I can give numerous examples of the flaws and misdeeds of persons in other professions, but a constant focus on the bad actors isn't helpful. Too much of the time political campaigns devolve into sparring matches that pit opposition research people with message writers that can turn a virtuous person into an unsavory person. Someone once told me that if it is too good to be true, it probably isn't.

Concocted juicy tales spun from a little thread of information can be fodder for those who want to win an election by misinformation that can cause someone to lose an election as well as their reputation. Following this most recent election, I have been particularly excited and pleased to meet most of the 36 new

SEE PLUM, PAGE 14

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# Encore Performers Present 'Santa's Special Delivery'

Dazzling songs and dances  
in a holiday-themed story.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

Filled with the joy and wonder of the holiday season, Encore Theatrical Arts Project presents "Santa's Special Delivery." This Broadway-style extravaganza features some 30 performers, creative choreography, elaborate sets, colorful costumes and nearly two dozen musical numbers.

The show runs Saturday, Dec. 9 and 16, at noon, 4 and 7:30 p.m.; Friday, Dec. 15, at 7 p.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 10 and 17, at noon and 4 p.m., in the Richard Ernst Theater at NOVA's Annandale campus, 8333 Little River Turnpike. Encore is a nonprofit, and tickets range from \$25-\$40. To purchase them, and for Girl Scout program details, go to [www.encore-tap.org](http://www.encore-tap.org).

In the story, Mr. Price, the greedy CEO of Holiday Toy Co. wants his company to be number one in the world. But it's second to the Kringle Corp. at the North Pole. Infuriated, he sends an assistant disguised as an elf to the North Pole to find out Kringle's weakness and sabotage its success.

The cast has been rehearsing since July and, said Director/Choreographer Raynor van der Merwe, "The dancers have all made sacrifices to be 100 percent in this show, and their commitment and passion shines through. It's an exciting, fast-paced and magical production that truly has something entertaining for everyone."

Encore alumni Paige Williams and Becca Perron wrote the script, which van der Merwe describes as "intelligent, well-written and having a different rhythm" than previous ones. The scenes take place at the Holiday TV studio, plus inside and outside Santa's workshop.

Chantilly High senior Anjali Ashok, a dancer since age 3, has spent 15 years with Encore. "After a long, stressful day, it's a place to express and refresh myself," she said. In this story, she plays Cocoa, the elf who distributes cocoa to all the other elves.

"She loves her job and has a bubbly personality," said Ashok. "I enjoy playing her because she becomes an integral part of the show. She has a sense of responsibility and takes pride in what she's doing." Ashok's favorite number is "Rockettes" because "It's precision dancing and we have a kickline at the end, which is always exciting and energetic."

"This show has a huge storyline with singing, dancing and acting, with professional-quality costumes, props and intricate sets," added Ashok. "And all these things together make it really special."

Ginny Shaw, a senior at Centreville High, calls dancing "an athletic way to get some

PHOTOS COURTESY OF  
RAYNOR VAN DER MERWE



Encore dancers pose for the "Yule Be Swinging" number.



From left are Anjali Ashok, Georgia Dawson, Lola Farkas, Ginny Shaw, Olivia Royall and Kelly Walsh.

exercise while sharing my passion." Playing an elf named Snowflake, her character is witty and considers gift-wrapping the best part of being an elf. "She also thinks she's the best one at her job - which makes some other elves not like her as much," said Shaw. "She's fun to play because she's so clever, and she and I both like sharing facts with people. And she's enthusiastic about what she loves, as am I."

Shaw especially likes the song, "Let Yourself Go," because "It's a high-energy, prop-filled, almost militaristic number. It's one of the dances in a Christmas parade." Within this musical, she said, "Young dancers show their talent and joy of the art. We've put in so much dedication, and we're all excited to share our hard work with everyone."

Dancing since age 2, Centreville High senior Olivia Royall has been with Encore for seven years. "Dancing lets me get out my stress and connect with other people," she explained. "When I'm dancing, I feel the energy in the room increase and it makes me happy."

SEE ENCORE DANCERS, PAGE 15



## NOTICE OF WATER RATE AND BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING December 14, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.

At 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 14, 2023, 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, 2024, include the following:

- An increase in the Availability Charge from \$4,640 to \$4,800\*
- An increase in the Local Facilities Charge from \$22,090 to \$22,910.
- An increase in the Service Connection Charge from \$1,790 to \$1,830.\*
- An increase in the Account Charge from \$44 to \$47.
- An increase in the Quarterly Billing Service Charge from \$14.95 to \$15.60.\*
- An increase in the base Commodity Charge from \$3.65 to \$3.84 per 1,000 gallons of water.
- An increase in the Peak Use Charge from \$4.00 to \$4.10.
- An increase in the Turn Off / Turn On Charge from \$53 to \$57.
- An increase in the Fees for Use of Fairfax Water Fire Hydrants to include the increase in the Commodity Charge and Peak Use Charge.
- An increase in the Overhead Charges for Labor from 102% to 104%.
- An increase in the Installation of Sewer Use Meter Charge Inspection Fee from \$42 to \$46.

\*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 \$241 million budget for calendar year 2024<sup>1</sup>. Water sales are expected to provide \$212 million, and the remaining \$29 million is expected from connection charges, investment income, and other sources.

The major areas of operation and maintenance expense are:

Category	-- \$1,000s --	
	2023	2024
Personal Services & Employee Benefits	\$ 63,208	\$ 67,746
Power and Utilities	14,457	15,190
Chemicals	12,068	13,625
Purchased Water	7,511	8,913
Supplies and Materials	5,591	6,449
Insurance	1,471	1,330
Fuel	821	930
Postage	602	620
Contractual Services	12,253	12,855
Professional Services	1,236	1,480
Other	2,295	2,739
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>121,513</b>	<b>131,877</b>
Transfer to Improvement Fund	(11,141)	(11,014)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 110,372</b>	<b>\$ 120,863</b>

Net revenues are expected to be appropriated as follows:

Debt Payment	\$49,244,258
Improvement Fund	\$11,000,000
General Fund	\$58,974,000

<sup>1</sup> 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](http://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. Susan Miller at 703-289-6018. Interested parties may submit written comments to [PublicHearingComments@fairfaxwater.org](mailto: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 13, 2023, to be included in the record of the public hearing.





# HOLIDAY PARADE

PHOTO BY JOHN LOVAAS

Santa magically lights the holiday tree at Fountain Square later in the evening on Friday, Nov. 24, following participating that morning in the Reston Holiday Parade.

## Reston Town Center Holiday Parade & Tree Lighting 2023

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

**R**eston Town Center launched the season, celebrating on Friday, Nov. 24, at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m., with the annual Reston Holiday Parade and Tree Lighting. In its 32nd year, the event could only have occurred without the hundreds of local and regional volunteers, among them performers, groups and dignitaries in the parade lineup, including the man in the red suit and his wife who flew in from the North Pole along with all the behind scene workers.

Headlined by this year's theme, 'Tis the season to sparkle at Reston Town Center, the annual event has been taking place since 1992 and depends on hundreds of volunteers to support the tradition, which is free and open to all.

The one-of-a-kind parade traveled along Market Street and featured 35 groups. The grand procession kicked off with giant inflatable helium balloons. They depicted the parade's iconic keepsake holiday bell ornaments distributed to spectators. Local and regionally talented dancers, musicians, and marching bands set the stage.

No parade would be complete without vintage cars and local dignitaries riding high style along the half-mile parade route, waving to constituents. Performers from cultural groups around the region lent to the celebration for the crowd's entertainment, capped off with much noise and parade bell ringing to welcome the arrival of honored guests Santa and Mrs. Claus in a horse-drawn carriage.

Organizers are very proud that USA Today nominated the Reston Holiday Parade for the eighth year to compete as one of its Best Holiday Parades. Last year, the Reston Holiday Parade came in fifth place thanks to voting by hometown and regional fans. Visit <https://10best.usatoday.com/awards/travel/best-holiday-parade-2023/reston-holiday-parade-reston-virginia/> to vote and vote daily up until this year's participation ends Wednesday, Nov. 29 at noon. Winners will be announced on Friday, Dec. 8, at noon EST.



The Reston Holiday Parade is a new event for Yiri, Perry, and Joy of Chantilly, who recently moved to the area from out of state. The parade bell will become a family heirloom, marking the baby's first holiday season in her new home.



The Anderson family of Centreville, Celeste, Elizabeth, 9, Sean, and Penelope, 7, snug down on the curb to watch the parade and make the event a day of fun. "We're going out to eat after the parade," says Penelope, with Sean adding, "We made reservations."



PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

From left, volunteers Judy Hendrickson of Annandale, Jose A. Castillo of Chantilly, Jeanette Castillo of Chantilly, Lisa Hart of Fredericksburg, Larry Williams of Fredericksburg, and Ray Hendrickson of Annandale await to hear their sites to distribute parade bells to spectators.

**Good neighbor volunteers are the sparkle.**



From left, volunteers Lucy Rosario of Falls Church and Betsy Rosario of Florida are decked out to pass out the iconic Reston bell necklaces to parade spectators.



Carlos Hernandez and his mom Elizabeth Hernandez of Reston, sit beside Shirley J. McMillican of D.C., ready and warm for the parade.





Scouts of BSA 1970, sponsored by United Christian Parish of Reston, learn the ropes of helium balloon handling.



Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill) represents the residents of Reston, Vienna, and parts of Tysons and Herndon on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. Ian Smith of Reston helps Alcorn adjust the banner on his truck to be used as a float in the parade.



Dancers of Melina's Dance Company in Lorton practice in the staging area before the parade. Far left, Isla O'Brien, 14, of Springfield, says, "I'm here because I love dancing. I want to share that with others and make them happy."



Members of the Pride of Herndon Marching Band, Herndon High School Amran Ahmed, 18, Christina Chung, 16, Helena Chung, 16, and Giselle Lemus-Romera, 16, warm up before they lead the Reston Holiday Parade. "We're doing this to bring joy to everyone here and as a practice. We go to Pearl Harbor in two weeks," says Ahmed. The Pride of Herndon has been invited to represent Virginia in the 2023 Pearl Harbor Memorial Day Parade in Hawaii on Dec. 7. Students will have the opportunity to play at the USS Battleship Missouri Memorial and during the parade.



Parade Grand Marshal Ken Plum and his wife Jane



The Spirit of Reston, South Lakes High School Marching Band will lead Santa and Mrs. Claus down Market Street.



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Madison Team captains: #5 Cord Yates, #6 Cole Desimone, #10 Luke Jarvis, #4 Caleb Smith



Westfield team captains: #44 Wiulliam Whitton, #68 Brendan Patridge, #65 Charles Beamon, #6 Matthew Jenks

# Madison Tops Westfield

BY WILL PALENSCAR  
THE CONNECTION

**T**he Westfield Bulldogs (9-3) traveled to Vienna for a Regional Final game with the Madison Warhawks (11-1) on Nov. 25. The two conference rivals are also two of the most successful programs in the region. Westfield won state Championships in 2003, 2007, 2015, 2016 and 2017. Madison has been runner up in the last two state championships.

As it has been often this season the Madison running-passing combo has been difficult to defend. On Saturday Madison would open scoring when Dominic Knicely scored the first of his 3 touchdowns on the ground with 4:37 left in the opening quarter. Knicely would run through what seemed to be an overcrowding of offensive and defensive linemen, only to find a hole and explode past three Westfield defenders for a 61 yard run.

Down 7-0, Westfield would tie things up when Landon Murphy took a pass from Matthew Jenks for 72-yard touchdown with 9:43 to play in the 2nd quarter. Westfield

would not get any closer. Madison would score 24 unanswered points. Dominic Knicely would score his second touchdown with 3:35 to play before halftime on a two yard touchdown run. With 2 seconds before half Madison's Julian Hopewell would kick a 25 yard field goal to give Madison a 17-7 half-time advantage.

In the 3rd quarter Darren Knicely would pull in an 8-yard touchdown reception from Madison QB Cael Yates. With 6:26 to play the lead grew to 24-7.

In the 4th quarter with 7:28 to play in the game Dominic Knicely would add his 3rd touchdown on another 2 yard touchdown run to complete scoring for the game.

With the 31-7 win, Madison will face Freedom Woodbridge (12-0) in the Virginia State semifinal at Freedom Woodbridge at 7 p.m. on Dec. 2. Freedom Woodbridge advanced to the state semi final game after defeating previously unbeaten Battlefield 50-7. Madison played Freedom Woodbridge in the State Championship game last year. Westfield's season ends.



The Madison Warhawks burst through a school banner



Dominic Knicely #1 runs with ball



Kennedy Duda #21 receives kickoff for Westfield.



Dominic Knicely #1 runs with ball



Dominic Knicely scores his 1st touchdown



# SPORTS

PHOTOS BY WILL PALENSCAR



Westfield Head Coach Kyle Simmons gives a pep talk before the start of the Regional Final game with Madison



Dominic Knicely's 61 yard touchdown run opens scoring in a regional final game between host Madison and Westfield



Official confirms touchdown for Madison wide receiver Darren Knicely #11



Landon Murphy #18 in motion for Westfield

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# ENTERTAINMENT

## DEMOCRATIC WOMEN LAUNCH HOLIDAY DONATIONS DRIVE

The Democratic Women of Clifton and Northern Virginia (DWCNV) is coordinating with Fairfax County Firefighters and Friends to the Rescue Organization <https://www.ffandfriends2therescue.org/> to collect unwrapped toys for local needy children throughout Northern Virginia. The toy drive is the highlight of the holiday season for both the first responders and the young gift recipients. The project is headed up by Retired Deputy Chief, Will Bailey. In addition to toys, the organization will accept monetary donations to purchase at a discount new winter coats for area children. Each year, the department distributes as many as 3,000 new coats to more than 50 schools, shelters, and non-profits throughout Fairfax and Alexandria. To donate to Operation Warm to buy new coats: <https://secure.givelively.org/donate/operation-warm-inc/team-up-with-firefighters-and-friends-to-the-rescue>.

Unwrapped new toys for younger children can be picked up at your convenience. Email: Donna Netschert to coordinate a time and place: [villagetimesaver@aol.com](mailto:villagetimesaver@aol.com) or text 703-887-7147. Or they can be dropped off at Donna Netschert's at 12724 Chestnut Street (side porch) in the Town of Clifton by December 8.

Gift cards from Target, Best Buy, Old Navy or Walmart are welcomed for teens in amounts from \$25-\$40. They can be picked up or mailed to: DWCNV, P. O. Box 143, Clifton, Virginia 20124.

Monetary donations may also be mailed to the DWCNV at the above address with checks made payable to: "Firefighters and Friends to the Rescue".

Britepaths <https://britepaths.org/> is the other excellent organization supported annually by the DWCNV. This organization provides programs that help stabilize families by giving them short-term food and financial assistance. Britepaths also offers classes, workforce development services, mentoring, and guidance to help families become financially independent and resilient. The organization welcomes donations of gift cards from local food stores such as Giant, Shoppers, Wegmans, Target and Walmart which are given to the families to pick out food during the months of January and February when holiday giving has come to an end and the need is greatest. In addition to donating grocery store gift cards, you may write a check payable to "Britepaths" and gift cards will be purchased for the families they serve. Mail grocery store gift cards and checks to DWCNV, P.O. Box 143, Clifton, VA 20124. DWCNV will collect for this project until December 31.

Donations to both organizations are tax deductible and receipts will be provided for tax purposes. If you have questions, email [cliftonwomendems@aol.com](mailto:cliftonwomendems@aol.com)

## ONGOING

**Bull Run Festival of Lights.** At 7700 Bull Run Drive, Centreville. Drive through 2.5 miles of festive light displays. Open from now until just past New Year's Day. Drive the festival route from the comfort of your car; turn off your headlights and follow the magical glow. Hours are Friday, Saturday, Sunday and

Holidays from 5:30-10 p.m.; Monday to Thursday 5:30-9:30 p.m.

## NOV. 9 TO DEC. 24

**Photo with Santa.** At Tysons Corner Center. Lower Level – Fashion Court/Nordstrom Wing. Mon.-Sat. 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. / Sun. 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. Tysons Corner Center's Santa Claus will arrive on November 9th, and be available for photos and personal time daily through December 24th.

## STARTING NOW

**Sip & Stroll.** At Tysons Corner Center, McLean. Shopping with a Twist will be in effect daily during center hours (10 a.m.-9 p.m. Mon.-Sat. /11 a.m.-7 p.m. Sun.), although individual restaurant hours may vary. Adult beverages must be in a logo'd disposable cup provided by the restaurant where the drink was purchased. Only alcoholic beverages purchased from participating restaurants may be taken outside the restaurant and into the shopping center. No outside alcohol is permitted.

## WEDNESDAYS THROUGH SATURDAYS

**Tours Aboard Tall Ship Providence and Sen. John Warner Maritime Heritage Center.** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Alexandria's Waterfront Park, 1A Prince Street, Alexandria. Guests of all ages are recruited into the Continental Navy aboard Tall Ship Providence with legendary Captain John Paul Jones. Recruits are assigned jobs on the ship, learn where they will work and live, how to load a cannon, etc... Tours conclude in the Naval History Theatre with a film about the ship. The Heritage center is a floating museum on the Alexandria waterfront. Visit <https://tallshipprovidence.org/>

## FUNDAY MONDAY

"Funday Monday is open to children of all ages, however is best suited for the preschool set! Funday Monday runs from 10:30 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. and — unless otherwise noted — is held at Fairfax Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. There are plenty of free parking lots/garages in Old Town Fairfax. Stroller access is available at the side entrance Old Town Hall facing Route 236/Main Street. For more information visit [www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts](http://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts)."

## SCHEDULE

Dec. 4 -- Music Together Sing and Groove  
Dec. 11 -- My Gym  
Dec. 18 -- TBD

## BONITA LESTINA FAIRFAX OLD TOWN HALL PERFORMANCE SERIES

Enjoy an evening of music showcasing a variety of genres in the elegant interior of historic Old Town Hall (3999 University Drive) in the heart of Fairfax City. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. and performances begin at 8 p.m. and run from October to April. Admission is free. Visit: [www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts](http://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts).

## SCHEDULE

December 8: Marcolivia – Classical String Duo  
January 5: Baltimore Composers Forum – Modern



A Puppy Nativity will be held at Church of the Good Shepherd in Vienna on Saturday, Dec. 2, 2023.

January 19: Navy Band Wind Quintet – Classical  
February 2: Kadencia – Puerto Rican Orchestra (part of the Chocolate Lovers Festival!)  
February 16: Matt Trkula – Classical Guitar  
March 8: Mandoleers – Mandolin and Guitar Orchestra  
March 22: James & Victor – Jazz Duo/Steel Pan  
April 5: Francesca Hurst – Solo Piano  
April 19: Sylvan Waters Duo – Harp/Brass

## NOV. 3 TO FEB. 4

**Eleanor Mahin Thorp: Metopic Ridge.** At Tephra ICA at Signature. Tephra Institute of Contemporary Art (Tephra ICA) presents Metopic Ridge, a solo exhibition by artist Eleanor Mahin Thorp. Thorp's paintings take us on an immersive site visit to examine the Blue Ridge Mountains exploring stability and change, the seen and the hidden within rocks. Through her discerning gaze rocks are more than geological entities; Instead, they metamorphose into vessels of history and human connection. Drawing inspiration from the fascinating transformations depicted in Persian miniatures, Thorp traces the hidden figures and forms in the rocks. Her paintings reveal the duality of rocks' existence as both a firm witness to time and a medium for that which is intangible.

## HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS AT THE WORKHOUSE ARTS CENTER

The Workhouse Arts Center will present several holiday events and activities in November and December for visitors to give back to the community, shop for holiday gifts, attend performances, take a class, and more. For more information, visit [workhousearts.org](http://workhousearts.org).

**Toy Drive** – Now through Dec. 11 The Workhouse Arts Center is partnering with OAR NOVA, a local non-profit restorative justice organization, to give back to our community. Join us in helping

families impacted by the criminal justice system by donating a new, unused toy in its original packaging. Toys can be dropped off in the Workhouse Visitors Center.

Creating Beautiful Ornaments with Lightbulbs - Saturday, Dec 2, 10:30 am

In this workshop participants will transform used lightbulb into festive holiday ornaments. Participants will be shown how to paint, collage and add glitter for a beautiful transformation. Cost, \$70. Building W-3, room 305.

Theater Performance – A Christmas Carol - Saturday, Dec. 2, 7 pm and Sunday Dec 3, 1 pm

Get into the holiday spirit with this season favorite presented in a whole new light. Through the magic of theatre, John Hardy single-handedly performs over 40 roles to bring Charles Dickens' classic holiday perennial tale to life at the Workhouse Arts Center. Tickets, \$25. Building W-3 Theater.

WinterWorks - Season Celebration - Saturday, Dec. 9, 6-9 pm

Our festive WinterWorks event will feature holiday merriment, fun photo opportunities, carol singers, a Raku ceramics activity, dance demonstrations, hot chocolate bar, smores by a fire pit, and more! Admission is free. Art activities, food, and beverages available for purchase. Workhouse Arts Center Campus.

Holidays...Hallowdays Movie Screening - Sunday, Dec. 10, 2 pm

While incarcerated at the Lorton Correctional Complex in the 1960s and 1970s, Rhozier "Roach" Brown led the prison theatrical troupe THE INNER VOICES. They performed original plays, skits, and social dramas at a variety of venues including the Apollo Theater and the Smithsonian Institution. Cost: In place of an admission fee, guests are asked to bring a new unused toy to donate to the Workhouse

Toy Drive. Building W-3 Theater.

New Year's Eve Musical Theater Performance – The Who's Tommy Sunday, Dec. 31, 8 pm

Based on the iconic 1969 rock concept album, The Who's Tommy is an exhilarating story of hope, healing, and the human spirit. The story of the pinball-playing boy who triumphs over his adversities has inspired and amazed audiences for more than 40 years. The New Year's Eve show includes a post-performance reception with midnight champagne. Tickets \$50. Building W-3 Theater. See the website for ticket prices for additional dates and times. Show runs through Feb 11. Fridays and Saturdays 8 pm and Sundays, 2 pm.

New Year's Eve Comedy Show with Antoine Scott – Sunday, Dec. 31, 8 pm

The Workhouse Arts Center presents, in collaboration with Rahmein Mostafavi, a special New Year's Eve comedy celebration. Time to laugh off 2023 and bring in 2024 with an abundance of joy! Join headliner Antoine Scott and a host of other hilarious comics for a one-show-only New Year's Eve comedy event. Tickets are \$50; \$60 front row reserved seats. McGuireWoods Gallery in building W16.

## NOV. 30 TO DEC. 2

**Winterfest. 5-9 p.m. At Brown's Chapel Park in Reston.** Reston Association is proud to announce Winterfest, a new three-day family festival that's perfect for the holiday season. Winterfest will feature a 'Light up the Park' walk, a Santa meet and greet, an 'Enchanted Forest' filled with decorated trees from the community, local vendors for holiday shopping, bonfires and smores, a pop-up bar, food options and more. A unique aspect of the event is the Enchanted Forest, which will feature up to 50 holiday trees individually decorated by sponsoring businesses, families or groups. Guests will be able to share



# ENTERTAINMENT



“It’s a Jazzy Christmas” will be held on Saturday, Dec. 9, 2023 at the McLean Community Center in McLean.



The Mia Saunders School of Ballet presents “The Nutcracker” on Dec. 9-10, 2023 at Centreville High School in Clifton.

in the holiday celebration as they walk through the Enchanted Forest and can vote for their favorite tree theme, most creative tree or most originality. Following the event, all trees will be donated to less fortunate families in the Reston community. The event is free for all Reston Association members; admission is \$8 for non-members ages 3-17, and \$18 for non-members 18+. Registration is open at <https://www.reston.org/winterfest-2023>.

## NOV. 30-DEC. 3

**Tyson's Library Quarterly Book & Media Sale.** At Tyson's Pimmit Regional Library, 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church.

Thursday, 30 November, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Friday, 1 December, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Saturday, 2 December, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Sunday, 3 December, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.:

Bag sale. \$10 for a full grocery sack or half price if less

Large selection of books and media for all ages and interests. Visit <https://www.tysonslibraryfriends.org/>.

Call 703-338-3307 for additional information. Proceeds benefit the Tyson's-Pimmit Regional Library and related activities.

## DEC. 1-3

**Holiday Book Sale.** At Centreville Regional Library, Centreville.

Dec. 1, Friday, 1-5 p.m.

Dec. 2, Saturday, 10-5 p.m.

Dec. 3, Sunday, 1-4 p.m.

Bag sale on Sunday. Fill a grocery bag with books for \$10.

Fiction, nonfiction, gift baskets and stocking stuffers

## DEC. 1-10

**Commedia Christmas Carol adapted from Charles Dickens.** Tickets are now available for Commedia Christmas Carol, which runs weekends Dec. 1 - Dec. 10 at Traveling Players Studio in Tysons Corner Center. Performed by Traveling Players high school students, the play is an adaptation of Charles Dickens' haunting and heartwarm-

ing tale of traveling through time and learning the importance of kindness. To purchase tickets, and for more information about the show, visit <https://www.traveling-players.org/performances/>

## SATURDAY/DEC. 2

**“Christine’s Crazy Christmas.”** 1

p.m. At Cascades Library, 21030 Whitfield Place, Sterling. Presented by the Sterling Playmakers.

“Christine’s Crazy Christmas” tells the story of a young girl who’s a bit of a bully to everyone she knows. That changes when Dinky, Santa’s right-hand elf, comes and tells her that she’s been added to Santa’s naughty list. Since Santa doesn’t like to put kids on the naughty list, Dinky tells Christine there is hope if she can be good through the whole month up to Christmas Eve. Will Christine redeem herself, be switched from the naughty list, and learn the value of being nice?

## SATURDAY/DEC. 2

**Puppy Nativity.** 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

At Church of the Good Shepherd (United Methodist), 2351 Hunter Mill Road, Vienna. The popular Puppy Nativity is returning to Vienna for the first time in four years, and area residents are invited to bring their puppies, dogs and other pets to take part. Costumes and treats will be provided for pets, and photos will be taken. Hot chocolate will be served, and the church’s youth group will be on hand to accept donations to support Second Story (<https://second-story.org>), a nonprofit serving youth in need.

## SATURDAY/DEC. 2

**Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy – A Celtic Family Christmas.** 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy return to the Center for the Arts for a Celtic experience like no other. In A Celtic Family Christmas, the charming duo invites you and your family into their holiday traditions on Cape Breton

Island with charming stories of family, farming, food, and plenty of music. Even their talented children will join in the foot-stomping jigs, dizzying fiddling, soulful ballads, and spirited two-stepping. Fiddle masters in their own right, when MacMaster and Leahy combine their talents and magnetic chemistry, the stage crackles with electric energy.

## SATURDAY/DEC. 2

**Puzzle Swap.** At Reston Museum in Reston. Visitors are encouraged to bring a puzzle and leave with a “new to you” puzzle! The event will take place during Reston Museum’s open hours until all puzzles are gone. Visitors can also purchase Reston-themed puzzles from the gift shop. The gift shop (excluding consignment) is 10% off the day of, with an extra 5% for museum members. Proceeds support Reston Museum a 501c3 nonprofit. Learn more at: <https://www.restonmuseum.org/event-details/puzzle-swap>

## SATURDAY/DEC. 2

**Breakfast with Santa at Tysons Corner Center.** 8-9:30 a.m. Food Court, Level 3. ‘Breakfast with Santa’ is a popular family tradition, involving a special and up close interaction with Santa and a complimentary catered breakfast. Upon Santa’s arrival, all can enjoy family friendly entertainment, holiday music, face painting, coloring activities, and more. This annual event presented by Tysons Corner Center is free for families, with no additional costs for the breakfast or activities.

## SATURDAY/DEC. 2

**Model Train Show.** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Arts Herndon, 750 Center Street, Herndon. The Herndon Historical Society’s annual Model Train Show will take place. N-Scale Operating Layout by the Northern Virginia NTRAK. The Herndon caboose will also be open that same day from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

## SATURDAY/DEC. 2

**Lake Anne Jingle on the Lake Christmas Festival.** 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Lake Anne Plaza, Reston. Join the Lake Anne and Reston Community for a day long holiday celebration, starring Santa himself! Santa will arrive along with the Vienna Singing Princesses on a decorated boat parade, and accompanied by Santa’s elves on paddleboards! Calling on kids of all ages to greet Santa and enjoy hot chocolate, food and gifts at our Christmas Market, as well as children’s choirs and ballet, Ukrainian Christmas songs, and children’s activities and ornament making.

Schedule:  
12 p.m.: Boat Parade and Santa arrival  
12:45 p.m.: Vienna Singing Princesses  
1:30 p.m.: Sunrise Valley Elementary School Choir  
2:15 p.m.: Reston Conservatory Ballet  
3:00 p.m.: Lake Anne Elementary School Choir  
3:30 p.m.: Ukrainian Christmas songs

## DEC. 7-24

**“Quilters.”** At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons. Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 2 and 8 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. Set on the American frontier, this moving musical tells the story of a group of women who come together to create a quilt that reflects their shared history, struggles, and triumphs. Visit [www.1ststage.org](http://www.1ststage.org) or call 703-854-1856.

## THURSDAY/DEC. 7

**“Tři Oříšky pro Popelku” (“Three Wishes for Cinderella”)** Foreign Language Film. 1 p.m. At The Alden at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. A retelling of the “Cinderella” story in a wintry landscape and with hazelnuts rather than a fairy godmother. This 1973 movie has become a holiday classic all over

Europe and is annually shown on TV from Spain to Russia.

## SATURDAY/DEC. 9

**“The Snowman in Concert.”** 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. At James Madison High School, Vienna. The JMHS Choral and Orchestra Departments will again host this magical family holiday event. Watch the film based on Raymond Briggs’ “The Snowman” book but with live choral and orchestra music accompaniment. After the film, walk through the winter wonderland and enjoy crafts and a chance to take pictures with the Snowman and Santa! Purchase tickets on the Madison High School website using the link in the features section - or by typing Snowman into the search bar. Tickets will only be available at the door if the event isn’t sold out.

## SATURDAY/DEC. 9

**Holiday Pops: Songs of the Season.** 4 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Featuring the American Festival Pops Orchestra with Peter Wilson, conductor. The American Festival Pops Orchestra presents Holiday Pops: Songs of the Season, a cherished tradition and Center for the Arts audience favorite. Gather ‘round for this annual concert that is sure to warm hearts and spread cheer.

## SATURDAY/DEC. 9

**The Wonder of the Season.** 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. At Reston Community Center, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. Experience The Wonder of the Season with a concert of sacred and secular holiday music, from Donny Hathaway’s This Christmas and a Nutcracker Ballet-inspired twist on Jingle Bells to Francesco Durante’s Magnificat. Adding to the delightful mix of music in this family-friendly concert, they’ll be joined by members of South Lakes High School Vocal Arts at the 4 p.m. show, and the Treble and Youth Choirs of Saint John the

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 15



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**OPINION**

**Plum**

FROM PAGE 6

members in the 100-member House of Delegates. This number represents the largest turnover in House membership ever in history. In leadership in the House of Delegates we have a member who has served in prison, a woman who was once homeless, and a woman who escaped with her family from the communist takeover of Vietnam. Each will serve along with the most diverse membership ever in a party caucus in the House of Delegates that leaves white men in the minority! Their experiences will enrich the body and our decision making. The diversity reflected in the caucus of one party will spread across all of the membership of the House, and the product of its work will be better for the range of experiences that will be baked into it.

As a public we need to inspire and insist that great persons represent us in the legislative halls and become known for their works. Democracy will be strengthened and the world will be a better place when they leave their marks in the sands of time.

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# ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 13

Beloved and Saint John the Apostle at the 7 p.m. show. Tickets: \$30 Adults 18-61 | \$25 Seniors 62+ | Free Youth 17/under & Active Duty Military.

## SATURDAY/DEC. 9

**"It's a Jazzy Christmas."** 7 p.m. At The Alden at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. "It's a Jazzy Christmas" is nonstop entertainment with a house band and a parade of notable DMV jazz artists. Tickets are \$30 for the general public, \$25 for students and seniors and \$20 for MCC district residents. Hosted by NBC4 News Reporter Mark Segraves, the show features headliner Saxophonist Lil' Maceo, an award-winning indie jazz saxophonist, whose performance style has been praised as "masterful class." Visit the website, [aldentheatre.org](http://aldentheatre.org).

## DEC. 9-10

**"The Nutcracker."** 3 p.m. At Centreville High School, Clifton. The Mia Saunders School of Ballet will celebrate the 29th anniversary of its winter tradition of performing as a gift for others with The Nutcracker. Tickets are available at [MiaSaundersBallet.com](http://MiaSaundersBallet.com) for \$10 for children under 5 and \$12 for ages 6 & up. Proceeds benefit CVHS Drama Scholarships and The Plummer Home.

## SUNDAY/DEC. 10

**Beau Soir Ensemble.** 2 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. This McLean-based harp, flute and viola trio returns by popular demand.

## SUNDAY/DEC. 10

**Holiday Magic at the Fairfax Station Railroad**

**Museum.** 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. From 11-12:30 p.m. enjoy holiday crafts, hot chocolate and do some shopping in the gift shop. At 1:00 p.m., Mark Phillips of the Magic Duel will perform. After the show, children can create a gift for a parent or grandparent or just enjoy the Holiday Express Train that will be running that day. Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$3; ages 13 and older, \$5 (\$6 for special events); seniors 65+ and military (active and retired) \$4. For more information: <http://www.fairfax-station.org>, <http://www.Facebook.com/FFXSRR>, 703-425-9225.

## SUNDAY/DEC. 10

**Mariachi Herencia de México: A Mariachi Christmas.** 3 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Representing a new generation of mariachi artists, Mariachi Herencia de México is a vibrant group of Mexican American musicians propelling the art and traditions of mariachi music to new heights. For the holidays, the ensemble brings the Latin American tradition of Las Posadas to the Center with songs of the season, such as "Feliz Navidad," "Los Peces en el Río," "Ave Maria," and more!

## THURSDAY/DEC. 14

**Winter Wonderland 2023.** 6:30-8:30 p.m. At The Lake House, 11450 Baron Cameron Ave., Reston. Proceeds will benefit Fellowship Square, an organization improving the lives of older adults who struggle to make ends meet by providing affordable housing and supportive services.

# Encore Dancers

FROM PAGE 7

In this show, she's Ribbon, an elf who works at a crisis hotline at the North Pole and helps whenever the elves have an emergency. "She wants to be good at her job but doesn't get many calls," said Royall. "It's fun playing her because she's not a typical elf. She's not afraid to speak her mind and show when she's discouraged or upset. And she doesn't always think before speaking, so she's a dynamic character."

Royall's favorite song is the "Frosty the Snowman" section of the opening number. "We wear white costumes and top hats and put all our energy into those characters," she said. "Overall, audiences will like this show's different variety of numbers and costumes, plus all the effort everyone put into it – including all the people working backstage. And that's what makes it so magical – it's like all the pieces of a puzzle coming together."

Lola Farkas plays Minty, a bubbly elf. "She's enthusiastic about what she does," said Farkas. "She's not the smartest but tries hard and really loves Christmas. I love playing goofy characters, and elves are fun because they're the epitome of silliness."

She likes the "Dig That Crazy Santa Claus" number best because "It's such an upbeat, fun song. There are times where I can let my character's personality shine and communicate with the other elves onstage through our dancing. I feel the most free dancing; it allows me to express emotions I can't do out loud – which is why I love it." And since this production has a new storyline and Broadway-inspired dances, Farkas said, "It's just like watching a Broadway show, except it's

at NOVA with dancers ages 10-18."

For Georgia Dawson, "Dancing gets your energy out. It's also social; I quickly became fast friends with the other dancers." She's portraying an elf named Candy, who's excitable and helps train the reindeer. "She's almost bossy, but is outgoing and is best friends with Minty," said Dawson. "Candy's like I wish I could be – she commands attention."

Her favorite number is "Toyland Ball" because "I'm a ragdoll in it, and we have lots of partner dances with the boy ragdolls. We also do lifts with them, which is fun. People will also enjoy this show because it has a unique premise and a shocking twist."

Playing a dancer in Mr. Price's holiday TV show is Kelly Walsh. "My character's hard-working and wants to power through until the end of the program, but the crew takes lots of breaks, and Price makes everyone do things over until they're perfect," she said. "It's fun because she's snooty and complaining and bosses everyone around."

A dancer since age 3, Walsh saw her older sister dancing and wanted to do it as soon as she could. "Encore classes are fun, and you connect personally with the other dancers," she said. "We've formed strong bonds, so performing together is even more special. It feels like you're doing your favorite thing with your family."

She especially likes the "Reindeer" song because "We dress as reindeer, and our fun dance gets everyone in the mood for a good time. Audiences will enjoy this Christmas show because the jokes are funny, and the captivating dancing styles and Broadway feel will appeal to all ages."

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# Uncertainty



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Not that you regular readers know when I write these columns, relative to when they publish; but suffice to say, given the publishing/ go-to-press schedules of newspapers, these columns must be written/submitted in adherence to those schedules/publication dates. As such, some columns, depending on subject matter of course, are written before the outcome of whatever cancer-related circumstance is top of mind at the time – for me; and then published after I know said outcome. This column is one of those and is always difficult because the dominant feeling I have – which contribute most to the subject matter of these columns, is basically I don't know. Moreover, the associated difficulty I have is knowing that by the time you read this column, I'll know what I didn't know before it subsequently publishes/you read it. And since I like to share everything with you in as real a time is as possible; the timing of this column means I'm not able to do that.

In a round-about way this column is about the diagnostic scan, a PET scan, I'll be having on Mon., Nov. 27th, the results of which I'll likely know by Wed., Nov. 29th-ish, the day this column publishes and days to late to modify is pre-publication content. By the time you read this, all the anxiety, conjecture, et cetera, will have passed, and the interpretation of the scan will be known, and then the fun begins, hopefully. Presuming I can gather my thoughts together about that interpretation – which will determine the next three-to-four months of cancer treatment, vis-à-vis my life, I will submit a column for Dec. 6, publication date which will address these concerns and update all you interested readers, which I assume after nearly 26 years my column has been published in The Connection, I assume I have a few. It's these kinds of moments when my brother's death rears its ugly head. Not having that backstop emotionally takes away much of what us patients truly need: support, understanding, encouragement and a positive outlook no matter the results. One doesn't survive a disease of this magnitude without help, and as my biggest booster, Richard was a multi-year backstop-of-the-year award-winner. And when you consider that I originally was given a "13 month to two years" prognosis, perhaps you imagine the frequency and type of conversations Richard and I regularly have had over the many years of my ongoing cancer treatment. Every step of the way. And scans, such as these are a very big step, always.

In my view then, this column is nothing about very much ado. The various scans I have throughout the year, as they are for many patients, are when the rubber hits the road and the doctor (an oncologist in my life) can really tell how you're doing health-wise. As my doctor has said: he doesn't need to see me in person, as much as he needs to my scan results. That will tell him what he needs to know about my thyroid cancer/overall health to decide if what happens next is more of the same or God help me, a change for the worse.

Apart from my monthly lab work and quarterly zoom call, this scan will indicate whether my warranty, so to speak, is to be extended and my life will go on relatively unchanged. (I imagine you can all appreciate then the depth and range of emotions we patients feel; before, during and after these high-tech diagnostic scans have been completed and interpreted. It's only a matter of life and death.) Unfortunately, it's difficult to affect the scan. If the results say something unpleasant then the conversation that follows with your doctor and of course your family, will be equally unpleasant. I remember when Team Lourie (Dina, Richard, and myself) attended our "ground zero" meeting with my oncologist when the doctor first told me my diagnosis. Richard was there then. Now he won't be, ever again. Without him around to help absorb some of inevitable fear and anxiety, the experience going forward scares me. Certainly, I've been there and done that. However, from now on, I will be doing it differently. Not alone exactly. But definitely missing my wingman.

Therefore, writing a column of some substance before these potentially life-changing facts are known is challenging. Which means this column says very little about something so big. In effect, I feel as if I'm wasting your time, sort of by telling you nothing about something. I'll try to write the ship and update you accordingly in next week's column. Until then, wish me luck. I need as much of it as you can spare. Enduring this cycle as much as I have over nearly 15 years (upwards of 100 exposures; all types of scans to consider: CT, PET, and bone scan, and yearly MRIs since I was diagnosed), doesn't make this process any easier. Experienced: yes, comfortable: no.

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





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