

CONNECTION

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Luke Bilowus, 4, and sister Makayla, 5, take a photo with Santa Claus Saturday, Dec. 9, in Fairfax City's Old Town Hall.



Rethinking Animal Protection Police

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PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

VILLAGE SQUARE AT CROSSPOINTE

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**Village Square
at Crosspointe**

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Franconia Shooting, Woodbridge Man Dead

Detectives from FCPS Major Crimes Bureau are investigating a shooting that left a Woodbridge man dead.

Tuesday, Dec. 12, at 1:47 p.m., officers responded to reports of a shooting in the 5300 block of Harbor Court Drive in Franconia. After an extensive search of the area, no victims or suspects were located at the scene. Prior to police arrival, witnesses described hearing a gunshot, and observed a suspect fleeing the area of a black Dodge Charger, with a gun in hand.

Around 2:30 p.m. officers were notified by Prince William County Police that a black Dodge Charger had arrived at a local hospital with a victim suffering from a gunshot

wound. Bryant Anthony Gillis, 23, of Woodbridge was pronounced deceased at the hospital.

Detectives determined a friend who was with Gillis at the time of shooting drove him to the hospital. They continue to investigate the circumstances surrounding the shooting. Preliminarily, the shooting does not appear to be a random act.

Detectives continue to investigate the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the shooting and are asking anyone with information regarding this incident to call our Major Crimes Bureau at 703-246-7800, option 2. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone – 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477)

BULLETIN BOARD

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

NOVEC OFFERING FREE CHRISTMAS TREE RECYCLING

Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative (NOVEC) will accept post-holiday cut Christmas trees and greens at its Gainesville Technical Center at 5399 Wellington Branch Road, near Interstate 66 and U.S. 29. Residents can begin leaving trees and greens on Tuesday, Dec. 26,

and NOVEC will continue to accept them through Saturday, Jan. 13, 2024. Residents should leave greens in the section of the parking lot marked by orange safety cones; drop off does not have to take place during business hours. Greens must be free of all decorations, ornament hooks, wires, and light strings.

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Future of Lake Accotink

Could a smaller lake provide most of the benefits?

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On Dec. 12, the Environmental Committee of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors received an in-depth presentation from the Task Force on the Future of Lake Accotink. A week before, during a regular meeting of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Supervisor James Walkinshaw brought forward the completed Findings Report from the Task Force on the Future of Lake Accotink, which has now been published.

Sharon Bulova, former chairman of the Board of Supervisors and chair of the task force on the future of Lake Accotink, presented

options at the Dec. 12 meeting. The meeting will also be available to view on demand after the fact.

As stated in Supervisor Walkinshaw's publication, "The Walkinshaw Advisory," he had requested that the board establish the Task Force to review and develop the results of the previous dredging studies, guarantee that all options have been explored to preserve Lake Accotink in the most equitable, cost-effective, and sustainable way possible, identify information needs and questions that should be addressed should the Board move forward with studying a managed wetland or hybrid option, and take into consideration the effects on the environment, neighboring communities, park recreation, and funding, including ongoing maintenance.

"I'm incredibly proud of the 30-plus members of the Task Force for their dedication over the past six months to work on this monumental task that means so much to our

community," wrote Walkinshaw. The purpose of the Task Force was not to recommend whether or not to dredge but to explore topics in more detail.

According to the executive summary, the Task Force found that a smaller lake, in the range of 20 to 40 acres, could preserve a significant open water feature with a program of regular maintenance dredging.

"The Task Force further finds that most, if not all, of the dredge spoils in an initial dredge should remain on-site in Lake Accotink Park to the maximum extent feasible. The Task Force also finds that some combination of a managed wetland and a grassland are viable options for the portions of the original 110-acre lake that have already or will in the near to mid-future fill in. Moreover, the Task Force finds that kayak trails and other recreation options could accompany a managed wetland/grassland and a smaller lake," states the report.

Lake Accotink Task Force Findings Report



December 8, 2023

SCREENSHOT

Lake Accotink Finding Report

Animal Protection Police or Animal Control Civilians?

County considers controversial change.

In 2016, Fairfax County reclassified its personnel who enforce animal laws to "Animal Protection Police Officers." In recent months, county officials have proposed elimination of that police position, in favor of using civilian animal shelter employees in the enforcement role. Under the proposal, the title Animal Control Officer would return to use. The reorganization would move management of the unit from the police department to the animal sheltering department.

Animal Control Officers would have the power to continue to enforce State laws for companion animals under Code Chapter 65, and related animal ordinances. However, as civilians, they would be without the full powers of law enforcement police officers. The change is sought by the county's animal sheltering and police depart-

ments; and is opposed by the employee union newly representing Fairfax County's police officers, the Southern States Police Benevolent Association (SSPBA).

The county clarifies that no current Animal Protection Police Officers would be without a job. Instead, if approved, incumbents could be offered a move to another police unit, or may accept an Animal Control Officer position, without loss of salary.

Conformity with Neighboring Jurisdictions

Animal shelter director Reasa Currier says the change would "bring Fairfax County into conformity with neighboring jurisdictions," who organize sheltering service and animal control under the same management.



Director Reasa Currier.

Why is this approach better?

"Having a consolidated approach to animal care and control and having both functions under one leadership optimizes resources and also allows an agency to expand service delivery," said Currier. "There's the connection with SEE ANIMAL PROTECTION, PAGE 11



PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Change proposal is not a reflection on the work of the Animal Protection Police unit which has received multiple commendations, including APPOs McClemore, Anker, and Lugo recognition by Virginia Federation of Humane Societies in December 2021 for saving canine Quincy from cruelty

Heartfelt Chanukah Celebration in Fairfax City

Menorah lighting, speeches, children's activities and festive food.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

The weather was cold, but the atmosphere was warm and welcoming during Fairfax City's Chanukah ceremony, last Thursday, Dec. 7, in Old Town Square. Parents, children and local dignitaries alike gathered for the lighting of the menorah on the first night of Chanukah.

It was hosted by the City and put on by Fairfax-based Chabad Lubavitch of Northern Virginia and the Pozez Jewish Community Center (JCC) of Northern Virginia. Attendees sang Chanukah songs, feasted on potato latkes, jelly doughnuts and hot chocolate. And the children colored pictures of dreidels, tried to guess how many dreidels were in a bowl, and were thrilled when the sky-high ladder of a fire engine dropped gelt (gold-foil-wrapped chocolate coins) for them to catch and eat.

At the outset, Rabbi Sholom Deitsch of Chabad Lubavitch wel-



Some of the many people attending the menorah-lighting ceremony.

comed everyone to the annual menorah lighting in Fairfax City and thanked City officials for holding it. "This year, of course, Chanukah has a lot more meaning for all of us," he said. "Everything that's going on in Israel [the current war with Hamas] is on our minds."

"The message of Chanukah – in connection to what's happening in Israel – can't be more clear," he continued. "And the message is

that darkness has no home. Darkness is not real. All you have to do is bring a little candle into a room, and the darkness runs away.

"Let's remember that each one of us can do another act and be a candle. And what we do impacts locally and globally. Tonight is Chanukah; it's a very beautiful and unique mitzvah [good deed], and that is to light the menorah – bring

SEE HEARTFELT, PAGE 5



Rabbi Sholom Deitsch addresses the crowd.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Fairfax City's menorah, lit for the first night of Chanukah.



Parents and children watch the Chanukah ceremony.



Before the ceremony began, shortly after sundown, attendees enjoyed jelly doughnuts, potato latkes and hot chocolate.

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Illuminate Fairfax City Begins Friday, Dec. 15

The public is invited to attend and enjoy Illuminate Fairfax, a brand-new, artistic light experience in the heart of Fairfax City. From Dec. 15 - Feb. 10, 2024, Old Town Fairfax will host four, outdoor light installations in conjunction with other winter festivities and art displays. They're all free and will be on display, each Thursday-Sunday, from 5-10 p.m.

Fairfax City received funding via the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and part of it was allocated toward this public-art event. Sponsoring Illuminate Fairfax are Fairfax Spotlight on the Arts, Fairfax City Economic Development and the City's Office of Historic Resources.

The illuminated art installations will be at the following locations:

- ❖ Old Town Plaza, 3950 University Drive, Suite 211;
 - ❖ Old Town Square, outside Draper's restaurant, 3936 Blenheim Blvd.;
 - ❖ Ratcliffe-Allison-Pozer House, 10386 Main St.,
 - ❖ Commonwealth Brewing Company, 10426 Main St.,
- For more information, go to <https://www.fairfaxspotlight.org/illuminate-fairfax/>.

Dec. 28 Blood Drive in Fairfax City

The City of Fairfax and Inova Blood Donor Services will hold a blood drive on Thursday, Dec. 28, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., at Fire Station 3 at 4801 University Drive in Fairfax. To register and choose a time to donate, go to www.inova-bloodsaves.org/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/33717.

GMU Mental Health Services for the Community

George Mason University's new Center for Community Mental Health, at 9900 Main St. in Fairfax City, provides evidence-based, accessible, affordable and culturally sensitive therapy and testing services to those in need, regardless of income.

The center sees children as young as 5 and works with community members of various ages, including veterans. The center's Emotional Help Line provides free, anonymous, confidential support in both English (703-215-1898) and Spanish (703-914-3878).

The line is open daily from 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. For more information about the center, go to <https://cmh.gmu.edu/>.

Heartfelt Chanukah Celebration in Fairfax City

FROM PAGE 4

lightness. Bring light into your heart, bring light into your house, bring light into your community, and bring light into the world."

Deutsch then invited Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read to speak. She began by welcoming the crowd of more than 150 people to the ceremony. "I can't think of a better reason for us to be standing out here in the freezing cold than the first night of Chanukah," she said. "And I loved the rabbi's message that we can all be a candle in this world. All of us can do something. We all have the power to lead by example to shine light in this world."

Read then asked attendees to "Consider how the sun moves across the globe. And as

we light the menorah tonight – in towns and cities from here to Hawaii, in communities just like ours, gatherings like this – we will come together." She said people will join with the Jewish community and with those who support them, and "From sea to shining sea, menorahs will be lit across America. There is more that we share than the things that divide us – and we must stand together."

Next, Rabbi Jeff Dannick, executive director of the Pozez JCC, thanked everyone for coming to this menorah lighting. "I look forward to Chanukah every year, but particularly night number one, when I get to come out with my friend, Rabbi Deutsch, and to

have this special event in Fairfax City."

"As you heard, these events happen all over the country, all over the world, and throughout the eight nights of Chanukah," continued Dannick. "Another one is happening on Dec. 14 in the Mosaic District. Please come and celebrate Chanukah with us, as many times as you can. And when you're not with us, make sure you're doing it at home with your families, as well."

Speaking last was Supervisor James Walkinshaw (D-Braddock). "You all know the literal translation of Chanukah is 're-dedicate,'" he said. "And what an opportunity, tonight and throughout Chanukah, to rededicate ourselves to our shared values of

love, compassion and humanity. And I know that Northern Virginia's Jewish community does that 365 days of the year at the JCC and elsewhere. Thank you for being such a valuable part of our community, and I'm so honored to be here with you, this evening."

Then Deutsch lit the menorah's center candle, the shamash, before leading the crowd in saying blessings in Hebrew and in singing Chanukah songs such as, "Dreidel Dreidel Dreidel." And at one point, Dannick linked arms with Deutsch and the two rabbis danced in a circle to that tune. Deutsch then lit just one other candle to symbolize the first night of Chanukah and the festivities continued.

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Christmas Plea: Affordable Housing for All

BY KEARY KINCANNON

As the holiday season descends upon us, our hearts are naturally drawn to tales of compassion, kindness, and the spirit of giving. It is during this festive time that we reflect on the age-old story of Mary and Joseph, seeking refuge on that fateful night in Bethlehem, only to find no room in the inn. The echoes of that desperate search for shelter resonate eerily close to home in Fairfax County, where the pressing need for affordable housing has become an urgent call to action.

According to Fairfax County School Board Member Karen Corbett-Sanders, there are currently 1,000 homeless children enrolled in Fairfax County Public Schools. These are young souls facing the harsh reality of not having a place to call home, a situation that is not unlike the plight of Mary and Joseph all those centuries ago. What will their Christmas be like in the shelters, motels, and homeless encampments where they lay their heads at night for sleep?

Michael is a young man navigating the harsh reality of finding himself homeless and on the streets of Fairfax County. He finds solace and sustenance at Rising Hope Mission Church where he comes for lunch every day and seeks assistance in securing a place to live. He is energetic and resourceful, working two jobs in the retail service industry. He is not unlike many in our community who work hard (often more than full time) yet cannot afford a place to rent. According to the County's Rental Housing Summary, the average rent for a one-bed-



room apartment is \$1,755 a month, requiring an hourly wage of \$33.75. Michael is fortunate to make half that salary. His story is a testament to the struggles faced by many in our community who can find "no room in the inn" of Fairfax's affordable housing supply.

While the County has made some recent progress with the opening of 700 new units of affordable housing at North Hill (Mount Vernon), Ovation at Arrowbrook (Dranesville), and Oakwood (Franconia), and the 500 units in the pipeline at Dominion Square West (Hunter Mill), the magnitude of the need is staggering. The Board of Supervisors has set a commendable goal of establishing 10,000 new units of affordable housing by 2034. However, the harsh reality is that as many as 31,000 units are needed immediately to address the current needs of our community members like Michael and the children in our public schools.

This holiday season, we must open our hearts to the urgent need for affordable housing throughout Fairfax County. It is our moral duty to urge the County Board of Supervisors and our legislators in Richmond to take decisive action on three crucial fronts:

Increase the Supply of Affordable Housing: The demand for affordable housing is overwhelming, and we must respond with an increased supply. It is essential to accelerate the development of new, affordable housing units to provide refuge for those in need.

Increase Funding for Affordable Housing: A dedicated commitment to funding is crucial for the success of any affordable housing initiative.

By significantly increasing funding, especially through a robust housing trust fund, we can ensure that the financial resources are in place to support those in need. Fairfax County needs to increase its commitment to affordable housing to two cents on every real estate tax dollar. And the General Assembly in Richmond needs to add \$150 million to the Virginia Housing Trust Fund as recommended by the Virginia Housing Alliance.

Preserve Existing Units of Affordable Housing: As we strive to build new housing units, we must also prioritize the preservation of existing affordable housing. This entails preventing the displacement of vulnerable communities and maintaining the affordability of current housing stock.

This holiday season, let us not only exchange gifts and gather with loved ones but also extend our compassion to those less fortunate. By advocating for increased affordable housing, we can embody the true spirit of Christmas and ensure that everyone in Fairfax County has a warm and secure place to call home. As we gather around our festive tables, may our hearts be moved to create a brighter future for all our neighbors in need.

Rev. Kincannon is the Founding Pastor and Pastor Emeritus of Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church on the Route One Corridor. He has served on the Fairfax County Governing Board to Prevent and End Homelessness and currently serves on the County's Affordable Housing Advisory Council and the Steering Committee of Ventures in Community – an interfaith coalition in Mount Vernon. This article reflects his views and not necessarily the positions of the committees on which he serves.

Inside Scoop: Drafting Bills for the 2024 Session

BY DELEGATE PAUL KRIZEK

As I write this column, the 2024 General Assembly session begins in just four short weeks! With the legislative session beginning the second week of January, the holiday season is always the busiest time of the year for our legislative offices, as we must work around our own work schedules and family celebrations to finish drafting the bills that we plan to introduce during the legislative session.

The 2024 session will be a "long session" of 60 days, kicking off on Jan. 10. While we House members are not under a bill limit imposed by our leadership, the Senators may only introduce a maximum of 21 bills this year. I plan to adhere to a similar number to ensure that



each bill gets equal effort. Even with a bill limit for both chambers in the last session, members still introduced over 2000 pieces of legislation! As it is an even year, the General Assembly will also consider the Governor's biennium

budget, which he will introduce on December 20th at the Annual Joint Money Committee Meeting.

This session will be very exciting, as there will be more incoming freshmen in the 2024 General Assembly class than ever before. This freshman class is younger and more diverse too. You can visit here to learn more about the freshman class. In addition, my own seniority within the House of Delegates has increased from 48 out of 100 last session to 32! As these newest members have only just gained access to the bill drafting system,

more senior members like me have drafted additional bills over the past few months that we think would be good for a freshman to carry that we can transfer over for introduction. <https://virginiageneralassembly.gov/>

I always prioritize legislative

efforts brought to me by my constituents, and those that will be heard in the committees on which I serve. So, as I am finalizing my legislative agenda, I want to give you an inside scoop on some of

SEE KRIZEK, PAGE 7

Submit a Letter to the Editor

To submit a letter to the editor, email editors@connectionnewspapers.com or via the following form <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/contact/letter/>

Ideally, letters will be original, about local issues and less than 300 words. Please submit letters by noon Friday before publication week, although letters received on Mondays can be considered. Letters must include your first and last name, home address and a phone number. Letters are routinely edited for libel, length, grammar, good taste and accuracy.

Your name and town will be published with your letter, other personal information will not be shared. If you are a student, your school name, age and grade will also be published.

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Krizek

FROM PAGE 6

the bills I have in drafting that I may introduce. Remember that not every bill that I draft will be introduced, much less get the Governor's signature and become law.

Brought forward by a constituent, I plan to reintroduce my bill from last year to create a partial retirement income tax exemption for Foreign Service Officers (FSO). I was also tasked by the Virginia State Police to introduce a similar effort for their retired officers.

I plan to reintroduce a bill requested by my constituents living in the historic Tauxemont neighborhood to address the impending groundwater well shutdown that the community is currently facing.

Two of my bills include extending the sunset (or expiration date) on commissions I have established. You may remember my bill from 2022 which created a Tribal Code Commission, which will update Virginia's Code to reflect federal recognition of Virginia Tribes. This bill will extend the commission for an additional two years to complete its work. Last year, Senator Reeves and I passed a resolution creating a joint subcommittee to explore establishing a Virginia Gaming Commission, which would oversee all forms of legal gaming in

the Commonwealth. The subcommittee required sitting members of the General Laws Committees in both chambers, and with so many retirements this election year, the subcommittee has only just had its first two meetings.

Senator Reeves and I are working on several pieces of legislation to further our reforms of charitable gaming and problem gambling treatment and support here in the Commonwealth.

Over the past several sessions, I have worked extensively with tenant groups and affordable housing stakeholders to support residents of manufactured home parks across the Commonwealth. We are currently workshopping two bills to reform the sale process of parks and boost tenant rights and protections. Manufactured housing parks are one of the best forms of naturally occurring affordable housing. I am proud to have five parks located here in my district along Route 1, and we must do everything we can to support these communities.

This week I am attending an excellent conference on imagining a Virginia without invasive plant species in Charlottesville. In next week's column, I will share my environmental bills which will include efforts to combat invasive plants in the Commonwealth.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 2

NOVEC's Vegetation Management employees will turn the trees, wreaths and garland into mulch to reduce holiday landfill waste. For more information about recycling holiday greens, contact NOVEC's Vegetation Management department at 703-335-0500, ext. 1600, or Vegetation-Mgmt@novec.com.

HOLIDAY DECORATING CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The votes are in, and the people of Vienna have determined which of this year's holiday displays shine brightest! The results were announced at the Mayor and Council Holiday Reception at Vienna Town Hall last week. Trousseau finished first in the business category, followed by Simply Social Coffee in second place, and Blue Ribbon Barber-shop in third place. Trousseau will receive one hour of Mayor Linda Colbert's time as a guest employee.

New this year for the business category is the honorable mention award, which goes to a business that was the most thoughtful and creative in including Vienna Elementary School in its display. Trace: The Zero Waste Store took home this award for including snowflake ornaments created by students at Vienna Elementary.

The first-place winner in the resi-

dential display category goes to residents of 121 Casmar St., SE, followed by 317 Patrick St., SW, in second place and 524 Walker St., SW in third place. Winning residents received a gift card from a local business and a 2023 Town of Vienna holiday ornament.

Members of the Town Business Liaison Committee judged the business entries and residential winners were determined by popular vote from the community. The popular vote also determined the business winner of the People's Choice Award: Pennywise Thrift Shop.

The contest hit a new record this year with 1,167 votes cast. For the second year in a row, contestants could earn bonus points by including Vienna Elementary School in their display, commemorating the school's 150th anniversary, which was celebrated earlier this year.

To see the holiday display map and images of this year's entries, visit www.viennava.gov/holiday.

AEROMEXICO TO LAUNCH SERVICE FROM DULLES TO MEXICO CITY

The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority announced that Aeromexico will begin new nonstop service between Mexico City (MEX) and Washington Dulles International Airport

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 14



Public Notice

Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

In accord with state and federal law, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has imposed new or changed existing weight restrictions and installed new signage indicating the updated weight restrictions on the following bridges and culverts (structures) in Virginia within the last 30 days.

Jurisdiction	Fed. Statute	Route #	Route Name	Structure	Posted Date
CARROLL	4780	881	CROSS CREEK RD/ RTE 881	LITTLE REED ISLAND CR #2	11/14/2023
MONTGOMERY	28886	314	DUCK PON DR/ RTE 314	STROUBLES CREEK	11/9/2023
PATRICK	13342	677	WILLIS GAP RD/ RTE 677	EAST FORK JOHNSON CREEK	10/27/2023

The list above is not a comprehensive list of all structures with weight restrictions in the Commonwealth but shows only structures that have new or changed weight restrictions within the last 30 days. The list contains only basic structure identification and location information and the date the new or changed weight restriction and signage became effective.

For a full listing of all bridge and culvert weight restrictions with detailed information about specific structures, including location data and actual weight limits, visit <https://www.virginiadot.org> and navigate to Info Center/Trucking Resources. This page references a posted structures report and a GIS map tool that contain detailed information about restricted structures in Virginia. To receive email notifications regarding new or updated weight restrictions for structures statewide, complete the sign-up form on the web page.

Notices regarding bridges and culverts with new or updated weight restrictions are published monthly by VDOT. For additional information or questions, please contact haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov.

The Virginia Department of Transportation is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on VDOT's Title VI Program or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Program Specialist at 804-786-2730.

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SEASONAL SIGHTS

Holiday Moments

Delightful sights, without them it isn't the holidays.

By SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

You might call this season Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, or just 'the Holidays'. No matter what name you give to this month's seasonal and religious celebrations, you likely have some iconic images in mind that mean the holiday to you, and traditional events you plan to enjoy. Until those boxes are checked, it just won't feel as if your celebration has truly arrived. We look at some of those moments that may be symbolic for you, as they are for many.



Holiday lights - Decorations vary from small and simple; to use of exaggerated elements; to immense displays encompassing whole blocks, like this well known one on Marshall Pond Road in Burke. Cars line nearby streets for blocks as families walk through the cul-de-sac taking in the immense display.



Visiting Santa - Claire and Ethan Bonney, 7 and 5 years old, from Alexandria, caught up with Santa at Burke Lake Park to tell him their hopes for presents and received a candy cane



Holiday craft fairs - In its 18th year, the Lorton Holiday Extravaganza, at South County High School on December 2nd, put on by PTSO (Parent Teacher Student Organization), boasts more than 180 craft vendors in its fundraiser which supports the annual all night grad party and provides teacher and student support.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME



Rite of passage - Building one's courage to meet Santa, is a rite of passage, and three-year-old Lucas Quiaoit is getting closer, but not quite ready for a close conversation.



Christmas trains - In all sizes, whether traveling around the tree or through the park, like this one at Burke Lake, capture special attention during the holidays. This one piloted by engineer Chris Wise of Springfield.



Nativity scenes - Christian depictions of the birth of Jesus, some with living participants, are common sights in church and private front lawns during the season. St. Christopher's Episcopal nativity this year saw Christina and Matthew Leuthy portraying the holy family, with son Nicholas, as Jesus.



Christmas tree lots - Pop-up lots offer Christmas trees of several varieties, tended by elves like Bob Newcomb of Burke



Crafting - Whether one crafts for personal pleasure, to make gifts for others, or as an enterprise, crafters are especially active in preparation for the holidays. Enterprising crafter Miles Grin, age 11, of Woodbridge, started his business, recently hiring friend Jackson Rizzotte, also 11 years old, to assist him with sales at his booth at the Lorton craft show.



Silly headgear - Parent volunteers Martha Hess, of Lorton, and Pam Gilbert, of Fairfax Station, get their silly on while coordinating volunteers at the Lorton craft show held at South County High School.



Christmas stockings - Family members of all ages, like Kayla, Callie, and Zack Barger, of Annandale, hang stockings on the mantle where Santa can't miss them, eager to check them on Christmas morning.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED K.DRINKHALL

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PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Displaying their decorated Christmas trees are (from left) twin sisters Ayla and Roya Vafaei, 5, and brother Parsa, 10.



Posing with Santa are the James brothers and their mom, Hayley. At each end (from left) are twins Calvin and Duncan, 6, with big brother Cooper, 8, in the green-striped hat.

Celebrating with Santa and a Holiday Market

Children enjoyed decorating and eating cookies, making a Christmas craft and taking photos with Santa, last Saturday, Dec. 9, in Fairfax City's Old Town Hall. Meanwhile, outside, visitors enjoyed live entertainment and vendors during week two of the Holiday Market.



With their decorated cookies are brothers (from left) Haydan Stark, 8, and Nathan Jett, 10.



Luke Bilowus, 4, and sister Makayla, 5, take a photo with Santa Claus Saturday, Dec. 9, in Fairfax City's Old Town Hall.



Also showing their decorated cookies are Haydan and Nathan's siblings (from left) Gracie Jett, 6; Mariska Stark, 7; and Jameson Jett, 4.

Animal Protection Police or Animal Control Civilians?

FROM PAGE 3

the shelter services when you're working on one mission; to make sure that our residents are connected with all of the services of the shelter." Currier worked under the consolidated model while at the Humane Rescue Alliance in Washington D.C., before coming to Fairfax County.

Fairfax County now separates the management of the two units. While the two units work together in the same buildings, they report to separate department heads. Both departments report to the Deputy County Executive Tom Arnold.

While jurisdictions across the Commonwealth and the country take various approaches to providing animal services, Currier believes "our industry is moving in this direction [consolidation]. So we want to make sure that we're adapting with the times."

Still in the proposal stage at this writing, it's not clear what new programs might be available at low or no cost, or from mobile units. Currier indicates "we are looking at programs and services that are offered by our neighboring jurisdictions through their Animal Control Officers." She points to one area where Alexandria outperforms Fairfax County. Alexandria animal control officers are able to return 47 percent of stray animals to their owners in the field, without the need to take the animal to the shelter, compared to Fairfax's 30 percent field return rate. She estimates that the 17 percent difference equates to a \$30,000 savings in shelter stay costs for strays until claimed by their owners. Alexandria equips their ACO vehicles with microchip scanners while FC APPO vehicles are not now so equipped.

Union Sees Police Role in Diversion efforts

The county stakeholders all seem to agree that pets, pet owners, and the community benefit by the availability, and resident knowledge of, certain county animal care and welfare services. The shelter's wish, to take needed low cost services to owners who may not be able to get to the shelters, to low-income pet owner's communities; means more animals would receive needed care. However, county management and the police union disagree on the best means to provide those services.

SSPBA argues that APPOs are trained in the field of animal care and welfare, as well as animal laws, and on diversion first programs; for example, related to mental illness or addiction. And that they are able to deliver shelter developed programs. Vice-President of the local union, Siobhan Chase, explains that APPOs now engage in community policing initiatives and events which helps build partnerships between law enforcement and citizen communities. She sees an opportunity for the shelter and police departments to work together, in a manner similar to how the Police Department now works with the Community Services Board and the Public School



Animal shelter is a place for comfort as employees and volunteers Carter, McClammy, and Fabry hold beagles rescued from life as test subjects in August 2022.

system. Chase has worked in the county's shelter operations and is now an APPO.

Future Focus: Enforcement or Humane Service?

At the time the Animal Protection Police unit was established in 2016, the Police Department then explained, "The public may not notice a big change, as the uniforms, badges, patches and vehicles will look the same, with the exception of the words "Animal Protection" replacing "Animal Control" on their badges. But for the officers, the expanded role facilitates their ability to investigate and prosecute for animal neglect and abuse cases and better serve Fairfax County residents. We look forward to welcoming our more highly specialized Animal Protection Police Officers and providing a higher level of service to our community."

The parties disagree on whether changing back to Animal Control Officers would be a minor change to citizen service. The 2015 legislative change, which drove the 2016 police unit creation, limited the powers of quasi police positions known as 'Conservators of the Peace'. The police union says that now, as civilians, the proposed ACOs would not attend police academy training, carry firearms, respond using lights or sirens, execute criminal and search warrants, or obtain orders under the "Red Flag" law or emergency protective orders. Those duties are exclusively permitted to trained and sworn law enforcement officers. Deputy chief of police operations Bob Blakely counters that changing times allow the unit's operating model to change to one using "predictive service options". He says the unit's organizational

focus should "change from enforcement to proactive humane services."

Blakely says while Animal Protection Police Officers "responded to over 17,000 calls for service in 2022 for ill, injured, or stray animals, only three cases required search warrants, two felony arrests, and there were zero custodial arrests."

He suggests the data indicates sworn officers may not be needed, or when needed, a sworn officer would accompany them, as is the case now.

Will Residents Have Input?

There are questions from residents about the proposal. Why eliminate Animal Protection Police Officers? What about the loss of experience? What about execution of search warrants and seizures in cruelty cases? Who responds to wildlife calls? Why haven't tax-paying residents been given the opportunity to comment?"

Helen Allen, of Reston, writing to the Connection Editor, commented, "To date, there has been no information made available to the public as to who will replace APP and what services they will provide. The public has had no input nor have the APP officers." (See Reston Connection, Sept 27-Oct 3, pg 9). Allen appreciates the police for their role in helping her rescued dogs.

A community member who ran afoul of the law, still has high praise for having police involvement in animal cases. Sharing that she has a mental illness, Amy E, said years ago she found she couldn't manage her three cats. She praises the officer who came to her house, "with an attitude of support; 'not you're a terrible pet mom'." After a few years of missing her cats, she got mice,

a guinea pig, and bird, but admits she wasn't caring well for them. When she called the police for help, she was charged with animal cruelty and later convicted, given one year probation and restricted from owning pets for two years. Still she praises the police, saying, "I could have been jailed, but they took me to a hospital and then I had medical improvement." She shared, "Police are better in dealing with the mentally ill. Police don't want to lock all up and throw away the key. I needed the help." She admits she also needed the 'wake up call' the arrest and conviction provided. "The time I couldn't own animals was the most miserable time in my life. I never again want to lose my right to own animals." Amy now has two cats, for whom she says she would "go to the ends of the earth".

Will the Proposal Save Money?

For many other residents concerned about county tax increases, controlling the costs of county services, including animal services, is a priority. Approval of the proposal could come down to economics. While county spokespeople have not claimed any expected position reductions, they do point to significant savings in the difference in salary, benefits, and training costs between the two position categories. Starting salary for a police officer in the county is \$65,747; currently with a addition of a \$15,000 signing bonus. Blakely estimates that the six months of police academy training costs about \$100,000 per officer, plus the cost of three months of field training. The FY 2023 County Advertised Budget included about \$4.5 million for 39 positions for the Animal Protection Police unit. It is expected that under the proposal the police unit's positions and equipment assets would transfer to Sheltering, as needed. Animal Control Officers typically earn lower salaries than police officers; averaging from \$53,357 to \$67,120 across the Commonwealth. D.C.'s Humane Rescue Alliance is currently advertising its ACO position at \$22 per hour. The State mandated training for ACO's is two weeks. Budget for the Department of Animal Sheltering included about \$3.2 million for 36 positions in the FY-22 Advertised Budget. The Shelter's draft organization, which has not yet been reviewed and approved, contains new specialized positions, for example for behavioral and training specialists, with approximately 101 full-time positions, including the wildlife unit, also transferring under the plan.

County representatives first discussed the proposal with the Animal Services Advisory Commission at their regular meeting on November 9. The union is expected to speak to the Commission at its Dec. 7 meeting. SSPBA representatives president Steven Monahan and vice-president Siobhan Chase spoke to the Board of Supervisors during the public comment period on Dec. 5.

Shelter Director Currier indicates the county is still analyzing costs in preparation for presenting the proposal to the Board of Supervisors Safety and Security Committee, scheduled on Jan. 30.

PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

ENTERTAINMENT



The Bull Run Festival Lights takes place at Bull Run Regional Park in Centreville through the holidays.



The Reduced Shakespeare Company's Ultimate Christmas Show will be held Saturday, Dec. 16, 2023 at Reston Community Center in Reston.

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.

SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO OUR PARKS

Enjoy the spirit of the holidays with Santa at Fairfax County Parks beginning this weekend. For years, Santa has made the rounds in our parks, creating cherished moments for families of all ages. Don't miss out on a fantastic experience at the park with a special appearance by our favorite "jolly old elf."

Holiday on the Farm at Frying Pan Farm Park. Fridays and Saturdays (Dec. 15 and 16) from 4:30-7:30 p.m. on Fridays, and 4:30-7:45 p.m. on Saturdays, Frying Pan Farm Park offers wagon rides, indoor activities, food, animal interactions, campfires and visits with Santa. Secure your \$15 pass during presale or \$20 at the gate for a festive experience!

Winter Wonderland Event at Burke Lake. Saturdays and Sundays (Dec. 16 and 17) from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Burke Lake promise holiday fun with train rides, Gingerbread Man Golf, and s'mores by the fire. Get your \$15 pass by Wednesday before the event, or purchase day-of for \$20. All passes include a visit with Santa, hot chocolate and candy canes.

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/>

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.

SCHEDULE

January 5: Baltimore Composers Forum – Modern
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.

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 or call 703-854-1856.

DEC. 7 TO FEB. 17

McLean Project for the Arts' Winter Exhibitions. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. McLean Project for the Arts will open its winter exhibitions—Moving Beyond Beauty: Reverence and Reclamation (Emerson Gallery) and To March is to Love: Weavings by Janel Leppin (Atrium Gallery)—on December 7, 2023. Both shows will run through February 17, 2024, with an Opening Exhibition Reception on Thursday, December 7, 2023 from 7-9 p.m. Bringing together five artists—Adjoa Jackson Burrows, Jacqui Crocetta, Maggie Gourlay, June Linowitz, and Elzbieta

Sikorska—Moving Beyond Beauty features work that is at once aesthetically pleasing and philosophically compelling.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 13

Foreign Language Film. 6:30 p.m. at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The Alden's foreign language movie series is curated by Performing Arts Director Sarah Schallern Treff, with more than a little help from you, our audience members! The series has a few surprises thrown in. The schedule is subject to change. Check aldentheatre.org for more details.

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.

ARTSCREEN: A FREE FILM SERIES CELEBRATING THE ARTS

Join in a free film series on Friday evenings in the City of Fairfax at the Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd., Fairfax. Doors open at 7 p.m.; Films begin at 7:30 p.m. Free popcorn, candy, refreshments and door prizes, too!

December 15: The Princess Bride. (1987) PG - A bedridden boy's grandfather reads him the story of a farmboy-turned-pirate who encounters numerous obstacles, enemies and allies in his quest to be reunited with his true love.

SATURDAY/DEC. 16

Reduced Shakespeare Company. 3 p.m. At Reston Community Center's CenterStage, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. The fruitcakes of the Reduced Shakespeare Company take you on an irreverent yet heartwarming trip through the holidays in The Ultimate Christmas Show (abridged). It's festive, funny physical family fun as these Three Wise Guys send up and celebrate

your favorite winter holiday traditions. The only holiday show you'll ever need to see! In the spirit of Shakespeare's comedies, RSC shows contain comic depictions of violence, mild innuendo, bawdy language, and the occasional rude word.

SATURDAY/DEC. 16

250th Anniversary Commemoration of the Boston Tea Party. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. At the Grounds of the Freeman House Store and Museum, Vienna. The Fairfax County Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and the Fairfax Resolves Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), in conjunction with Historic Vienna, Inc., will honor the bravery of the Sons and Daughters of Liberty with a commemoration ceremony. Highlights will include a historical portrayal of Daughter of Liberty, Sarah Bradlee Fulton, by Mary Ann Jung, color guard presentation by the SAR, a Proclamation read by Vienna Mayor Linda J. Colbert, photo opportunities with historic figures, and period refreshments served at the Freeman House Store and Museum. In the event of inclement weather, the event will take place at the Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna.

DEC. 16-17

Fairfax Symphony Orchestra and Fairfax Ballet, Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker. 4 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Tchaikovsky's unforgettable music is performed live by the Fairfax Symphony, together with the magical dance by The Fairfax Ballet and soloists from New York City Ballet. The FSO production is unique in the Washington, D.C. region to feature live, musical accompaniment by a full orchestra, together with dancers on stage. Audiences delight in The Fairfax Ballet's magical dance performance with original choreography with guest soloists from New York City Ballet, as the Fairfax Symphony under the direction Christopher Zimmerman performs Tchaikovsky's captivating score live.



The Fairfax Symphony Orchestra and the Fairfax Ballet perform Dec. 16-17, 2023 at GMU Center for the Arts in Fairfax.

DEC. 16-17

Collection for Becca's Closet. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The Potomac School students and McLean Community Center are collecting gently used prom and homecoming dresses, shoes and accessories for Becca's Closet. This nonprofit gives donated dresses to girls who may not otherwise be able to attend these events. Donations may be dropped off at McLean Community Center on Dec. 16-17. Visit www.beccascloset.org

MONDAY/DEC. 18

The Old Firehouse Winter Break Trip – Ice Skating & A VR Experience. 8 a.m.- 6 p.m. Come lace up your ice skates and glide around the rink with us. Following the rink, we'll grab some lunch then head over and dive into the immersive world of Virtual Reality. A signed waiver is required to participate. Admission to all activities and lunch is included in the fee.

TUESDAY/DEC. 19

G.F. Handel's Messiah Sing-along. 7:30 p.m. At Chapel of Saint John Neumann Catholic Church, 11900 Lawyers Road, Reston. Enrich your holiday season by singing the glorious Christmas portion of G.F. Handel's Messiah. The sing-along will feature guest soloists Emily Casey, soprano; Kristen Dubenion-Smith, mezzo soprano; Andrew Brown, tenor, and James Shaffran, bass. Bring your Messiah score or rent one onsite. Be an angel and receive a \$5 discount on admission or one free Messiah score rental. Simply bring a donation of non-perishable food items or toiletries for the South Lakes High School Pantry.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 20

Old Firehouse Center, Winter Break

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Trip to Dave & Buster's. 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eat, drink, and play games! Dave and Buster's offers one of the best dining and entertainment experiences around. Buffet lunch and a \$25 game card with unlimited arcade game play are included. Bring additional money for ticketed arcade games as desired.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 20

Longest Night Service of Worship.

7:30 p.m. At Lewinsville Presbyterian Church 1724 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. If you have experienced loss in the last year all the holiday festivities can make your grief even more poignant. Grieving the loss of a loved one or coming to terms with so much loss happening in our world will be centered in this worship service. This service will intertwine music with scripture, candlelight and reflection. This event is free and open to the public, and all are welcome!

FRIDAY/DEC. 22

Virginia National Ballet's The Nutcracker. 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. At Capital One Hall, Tysons Corner. Don't miss VNB's new Nutcracker! You'll love the new characters including The Rat King, The Nutcracker, the Chinese Lion, and many new costumes for Flowers, Mice, and more. You'll also see gorgeous new backdrops that are 30 x 50 feet with legs (matching side curtains) and borders across the top, and many new props and scenery. Much of the choreography has also been upgraded to match all of the new scenery, sets, and costumes.

SUNDAY/DEC. 24

Christmas Eve Service. 11 a.m. At Lewinsville Presbyterian Church, 1724 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. The youth and young choirs will present "The Light Before Christmas," featuring the music from

the Joseph Martin musical. Enjoy cocoa and cookies before and following the service and feel the warmth of Christmas. This event is free and open to the public, and all are welcome!

The traditional Candlelight Communion Christmas Eve service will begin at 6:30 p.m. and will feature a baroque orchestra and the Chancel Choir performing Johann Sebastian Bach's "Wachet Auf" Cantata. The service of worship featuring beautiful music of the season will begin at 7:00 pm.

If you want a different kind of Christmas Eve service, perhaps you would like to come to our Jazz Christmas Eve service which begins with festive music at 9:15 p.m. This service, also a candlelight communion service, will feature a jazz quartet and our young adult alumni choir.

DISCOVER THE JOY OF THE HOLIDAYS IN A PARK

Embrace the magic of the season with the Fairfax County Park Authority. Enjoy the company of friends, family and community at any of our festive activities and events throughout the holiday season.

Holiday on the Farm
Fridays-Saturdays, Dec. 15 and 16, Frying Pan Farm Park, \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door

Come celebrate the holidays with an evening of wagon rides, indoor activities, food, animal interactions, campfires and visits with Santa. Bring the whole family and see the farm in a festive way.

Winter Wonderland
Saturdays-Sundays, Dec. 16-17, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Burke Lake Park, \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door

It's all aboard for the Holiday Express train ride. Take a spin on the Carolers Carousel, play Gingerbread Man mini golf and toast s'mores

by the fire as you kickstart your holidays. Plus, meet Santa, sip hot chocolate, and munch on candy canes! \$15 Pass on Sale (Available through Wednesday before the event), Day-of Event Passes is \$20.

Ugly Holiday Sweater Family Skate and Dance Night

Saturday, Dec. 16, 6-9 p.m., Franconia Rec Center, \$10 in advance, \$15 at the door

Light up the night with your tackiest holiday sweater as you roller skate and groove to music by a DJ. Challenge your family and friends to see who can drum up the most holiday spirit with their loudest holiday sweater. Take a spin around the gym floor on your roller skates and jump on the dance floor as the DJ plays some holiday classics and other good tunes. The event features snacks, drinks, holiday decorations and promises an all-around jolly good time.

Candlelight Holiday Tour at Sully Historic Site

Saturday Dec. 16. Choose times between 4:45-7 p.m., Sully Historic Site, \$12

Enjoy an elegant walk-through tour of Sully, the 18th century home of Richard Bland Lee, Northern Virginia's first congressman. Tour by the glow of candlelight as it illuminates the house. Make a holiday craft and enjoy a hot beverage and cookies based on a historical recipe.

IONA Holiday Concert
Friday, Dec. 29. Spots available 1-1:45 p.m., 2:15-3 p.m. or 3:15-4 p.m., Sully Historic Site, \$15

One of the top-rated pan-Celtic groups in the world treats its audience to high-energy entertainment featuring Scottish fiddling, percussion and vocals. Refreshments served in the 18th century kitchen.

Puppet Show at Frying Pan Farm Park
Friday, Dec. 29. Spots available 10:15-11 a.m. or 11:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.,

Frying Pan Farm Park, \$15
Join Master Puppeteer Bob Brown in a jolly, fun-filled romp through a winter wonderland as his delightful, trick marionettes perform incredible feats of skill and daring that will leave your young audience shouting with laughter! Fun and fantasy, mirth and merriment, giggles and amazement all mixed together to the sound of your favorite holiday music! He will be retiring after 60-plus years, so come and enjoy his final performance. To find out more, or to register for programs, visit the Seasonal Events in the Parks website.

TUESDAY/DEC. 19

Barter Players "Frosty". 4 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Family friendly. In this one-hour musical, Billy discovers magic in a stolen hat that brings his snowman to life. Their quest through NYC to find Billy's family shows them that the real magic of the season is love.

SUNDAY/DEC. 31

'Noon Year's Eve' Event. 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Town of Vienna and Cedar Park Shopping Center, 260 Cedar Lane, Vienna. Town of Vienna in partnership with Cedar Park Shopping Center will host a daytime celebration for family and kids to ring in the "noon" year as we say goodbye to 2023 and celebrate the arrival of 2024. This family-friendly event features a pop-up artisan market, live music, games, giveaways, face painting, crafts, and a noon countdown celebration. Some activities will take place under a heated tent. Free. Rain or Shine.

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.

New Year's Eve Musical Theater Performance – The Who's Tommy Sunday, Dec. 31, 8 p.m., Workhouse Arts Center

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 comedians for a one-show-only New Year's Eve comedy event. Tickets are \$50; \$60 front row reserved seats. McGuireWoods Gallery in building W16.

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Legals **Legals**

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY FOR THE SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE PROPOSED DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (DIA) HEADQUARTERS (HQ) ANNEX CONNECTOR ROADS FORT BELVOIR, VIRGINIA

The U.S. Army Garrison Fort Belvoir hereby gives Notice of the Availability (NOA) for the Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) for the proposed construction of the connector roads for the DIA HQ Annex within the vicinity of the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency (NGA) complex on Fort Belvoir's North Area, Fairfax County, Virginia. The purpose of this project is to add a traffic circle to GEOINT Drive to facilitate the flow of traffic to the existing National Geospatial Intelligence Agency headquarters (NGA) and the new DIA facility. The EA for the DIA Annex was finalized October 2021.

The Supplemental EA has been prepared in accordance with the regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), (Public Law 91-190, 42 USC 43214347 January 1, 1970), amendments, and the Army's Implementing Regulations (32 CFR Part 651, *Environmental Analysis of Army Actions*). The SEA is available to view in printed form at the Lorton Branch, Kingstowne Branch, and Sherwood Regional Branch of the Fairfax County Public Library system, or to view/download electronically at <https://home.army.mil/belvoir/index.php/about/Garrison/directorate-public-works/environmental-division>. Click the "Programs and Documents" tab, then "National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Program." Information about the SEA and links to download the various documents are provided under the "Open for Public/Agency Review & Comment" heading.

The final 2021 EA for the DIA HQ Annex can be found to view/download electronically at <https://home.army.mil/belvoir/index.php/about/Garrison/directorate-public-works/environmental-division>. Click the "Programs and Documents" tab, then "National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Program." Information about the Final 2021 EA and links to download the various documents are provided under the "Final NEPA Documents" heading.

Comments or questions on the SEA and Draft FNSI may be directed in writing to: Environmental Division, Directorate of Public Works, Building 1442, 9430 Jackson Loop, Fort Belvoir, VA 22060, or by email to: DIA_Annex_SEA@usace.army.mil. Comments must be received no later than 30 days after publication of this NOA.

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BULLETIN

FROM PAGE 7

(IAD) on July 1, 2024. Flights will operate daily year-round. With the start of this and other routes, Aeromexico will serve 36 U.S. markets by July 2024.

VIENNA TOWN COUNCIL ADOPTS REVISED ZONING CODE

After an extensive, three-year process to update the Town of Vienna's zoning code, the Vienna Town Council adopted the revised plan at its regular meeting last week at Town Hall. The newly adopted ordinance will take effect on Jan. 1, 2024. The purpose of the project referred to as Code Create Vienna was to clarify, simplify, reorganize, and update key chapters of the Town code. Among other things, the update provides opportunities for residents to enhance outdoor living space to accommodate modern lifestyles, requires more green space in commercial areas and gives businesses greater flexibility to explore more commercial opportunities. To learn more about the recently adopted zoning and subdivision code, visit www.viennava.gov/codeupdates.

MCLEAN NEWCOMERS AND NEIGHBORS

The club was founded in 1969 to create new friendships, provide opportunities for socializing and acquaint residents with the community. It sponsors many group activities including: Anything with food, Armchair Traveler, Book Club, Bunco, Canasta, Crafty Ladies, Genealogy, Golf, Let Us Lunch, Mah Jongg, Mah Jongg NY Style, Movie Lovers, Museums/House and Garden Tours, Nature Walks, Restaurant Critics, Sing for Fun and Tech Forums. Application forms may be mailed to: Membership McLean Newcomers and Neighbors, P.O. Box 6166, McLean, VA 22106. Visit the website: www.mcleannewcomers.org.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have received training and are qualified to offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthy-minds/fairfax or www.nami-north-ernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

The Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia Caregivers' Support Group takes place the first and third Tuesdays of each month, 10-11:30 a.m. via Zoom. This group is for caregivers of family members with dementia. Meetings are gently facilitated. For more information and to get the Zoom link, contact Jack Tarr at jtarr5@verizon.net or 703-821-6838.

Haven of Northern Virginia Support Group. 703-941-7000, www.havenofnova.org or havenofnova@verizon.net.

Virginia Chronic Pain Support Group Meets from 1:30-3 p.m. the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Kaplan Center for Integrative Medicine, 6829 Elm St., Suite 300, McLean. Group leader, Jodi Brayton, LCSW. 703-532-4892.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FAIRFAX SYMPHONY & FAIRFAX BALLET

Fairfax Symphony and Fairfax Ballet present Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* Dec. 16 & 17 at 4 p.m. at GMU Center for the Arts.

See *The Nutcracker* with Live Orchestra

Two Fairfax County arts institutions — the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra and The Fairfax Ballet Company — collaborate to present their seventh production of the holiday masterpiece, Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*. This Fairfax production is a cherished, annual tradition, with two performances on Dec. 16 & 17 at 4 p.m. at George Mason University Center for the Arts.

The FSO production is unique in the region to feature live musical accompaniment by a full orchestra, together with dancers on stage. The Fairfax Ballet's magical dance performance soars with original choreography and guest soloists from New York City Ballet. The Fairfax Symphony, under the direction Christopher Zimmerman, performs Tchaikovsky's captivating score live.

"Audiences delight in the incredible dancers on stage, while Tchaikovsky's unforgettable music is performed live by our orchestra musicians," said Jonathan Kerr, Executive Director, Fairfax Symphony Orchestra. "The dance, live music, plus the stunning, digital scenery creates a winter wonderland in a magical production that's perfect for the entire family."

The Fairfax Symphony Orchestra and The Fairfax Ballet Company showcase renowned guest soloists from New York City Ballet dancing the lead roles this year. The Fairfax Ballet was established in 1971 to develop in each student a love of dance, a strong technical foundation, and an artistic education. Karla Petry serves as Executive Director of The Fairfax Ballet and owner of The Russell School of Ballet.

"Audiences love this special treat as we welcome our professional guest soloists from premier dance companies together with our local stars," said Petry.

Andrea Cook is Artistic Director for The Fairfax Ballet Company, and she leads the choreography in one of the most complex theatrical ballets in the Company's repertory. She is a Fairfax County native and Chantilly HS alum. Her leadership has helped the



Company maintain its long-held reputation for high-quality training and service, while building on its performances with new cho-

reography. More than fifty dancers and students ranging from ages 7-18 will take the stage.

Ho Hum



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

The totally wrong attitude to have, if even for a second. What I am specifically referring to is my reaction the result of my PET scan from Nov. 27, that I wrote about a few columns ago. The column entitled "Uncertainty" was "much ado about something" since it was written before the results of a potentially life-changing scan was known. Well, the results came electronically as they always do. Initially, the patient receives the actual report from the radiologist (written in medical jargon) that is also sent to the doctor. Typically, I'll receive the report before my oncologist has even had a chance to read and review it meaning I'm left to my own non-medical devices to try and interpret its meaning. Subsequently, I will receive an email from my oncologist deciphering the report and breaking it down into language I can understand. That language, fortunately said the following: "Scan looked good." And with that three-word summary, I can once again breathe normally and return my seat to its upright position and live a semi normal life, that is until the next medical hurdle which in the cancer world comes around regularly. Nevertheless, I never look gift oncologist in the stethoscope so I will rejoice until that next hurdle. But to the extent, one takes amazingly good news like I received today with a grain of salt - because I've received mostly good news over these last nearly 15 years since I was diagnosed, is a colossal error in judgment. No doubt you're familiar with the expression "any port in a storm?" Cancer is not just 'a storm,' it's category five hurricane with tornadoes on the side.

Still, after so many years of treatment/scans, et cetera based on my original stage IV non-small cell lung cancer diagnosis, with its "13 month to two years" prognosis - given in late Feb. 2009 at the initial Team Lourie meeting with my oncologist, I have learned to take nothing for granted and to cherish each and any bit of good health news with a shaker full of salt. However, in an attempt to minimize any anxiety waiting for results and furthermore to try and think positively and powerfully to affect those results, one can hope/anticipate even, that the results will be the kind the patient can live with, pun intended. But until one reads those few words or hears those words over the phone or receives them in person from your oncologist, it's impossible to go about your business as per usual. It's sort of a mental road block. Oh sure, you can compartmentalize that anxiety, but such life-affecting news can only be delayed for so long. Eventually, and much sooner than later - if you know what's good for you, you have to face your demons and access your email/call your doctor. Ignoring your cancer-related news/lab work/scan result only buys you so much time. There is no future pretending that the results don't matter somehow. They matter. Your life's at stake. You can take your time, but not too much of it.

This column's title has more to do with the patient's reaction after the fact, the fact being that your "scan looked good." Thankfully. Because cancer is one of the scariest words. It means trouble with a capital "T." Just because one has had a reasonably - and unexpectedly good run, as I have doesn't mean for a second that health circumstances can't change (I didn't say won't. I'm no fool). One can never lose sight of their medical roots, so to speak. I received a "terminal" diagnosis at age 54 and a half - not three months after my widowed mother died had at age 86, that I would probably not live to age 57. Not having thought about my own death too much, instead having been focused on my parent's deteriorating health, I kind of thought I'd live to at least the ages that they did, 87 and 86, respectively. Hearing my prognosis was disappointing to say the least. To say the most it was surreal, which is a word/description often associated with incredible/unbelievable/out-of-the-blue news like being told you're going to die in the next two years. Then, when you don't die in those two years, and lo and behold, you're still being cancer-treated/scanned nearly 15 years later, it occasionally becomes easy (certainly wishful thinking) to begin to take it all in stride, as if its normal/no big deal. This column is meant to remind me that the absolute last thing my recurring scans are is normal/no big deal. Every day I'm alive, especially given my medical history is a 'big deal.' And the biggest deals are the days when I receive encouraging/stable scan results which enable me to extend my warranty (euphemistically speaking) and remain in the game a little bit longer. And when I go through this identical experience next June (awaiting the results from my next scheduled PET scan) or next week when I have my first renal ultrasound, I must be mindful of how lucky I've been and how grateful I should be, always. Taking any of it for granted is the last thing I should be taking.

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

HOLIDAY

Celebrating with Santa and a Holiday Market



Conrad Goelzer, 7, strikes a cool and casual pose with Santa.



Roy Yang, 3, and Santa are both in a pensive mood.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



With the McGrath Morgan Academy of Irish Dance, (from left) Alexa, Molly, Anabel, Angelina, Jordan and Grace start to perform an Irish reel.



Fairfax Ferns Garden Club members (from left) Nancy Rosenkranz, Teresa Finn and Club President Maggie Pfeifle are selling wreaths, swags and fresh Christmas arrangements.



Standing beside her hand-drawn, silkscreen prints is Alex Neckopulos of Analog Artworks.