

# The Arlington Connection

## A Place that Shaped Me

PAGE 3

Watercolor by Natalia Colocho Mejia, Age 13,  
Grade 8, Kenmore Middle School, Arlington,  
Virginia, Ms. Monma's 8th grade English Class.  
A Place That Shaped Me: Playing in the sand  
under the beautiful sunset of El Salvador.

### Children's & Teens' Connection 2023

# CHILDREN'S AND TEENS' CONNECTION

## Yorktown High School Ceramics

CHRISTINE BOLON, ART TEACHER  
CERAMICS 1, 2, 3; AP 3D ART & DESIGN



Brian Mohanty, Grade12,  
AP 3D Art and Design



BrinleyHyatt, Grade12,  
Ceramics1



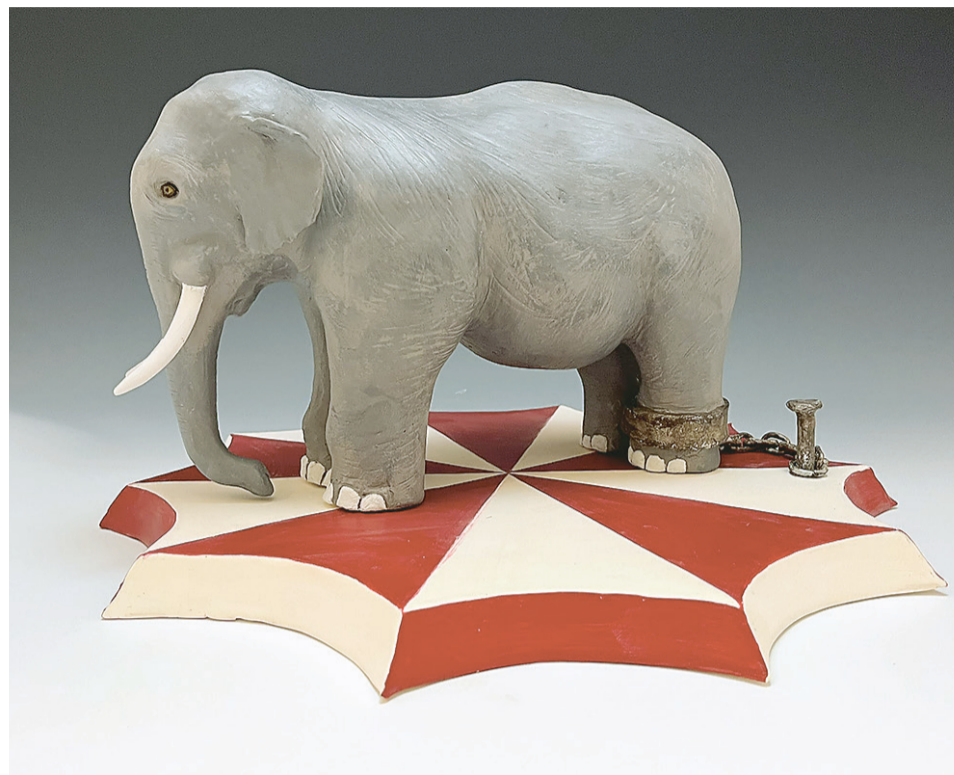
Felix Ko, Grade11, Ceramics3



Kendall Moore, Grade12,  
AP 3D Art and Design



LiaMusser, Grade12,  
AP 3D Art and Design



CaiusWorrell, Grade12, AP 3D Art and Design



Greta Bensten, Grade11, Ceramics3



Kendall Moore, Grade12, AP 3D Art and Design



Ellie McCracken, Grade11, Ceramics3



Katie King, Grade12, AP 3D Art and Design



OliviaHartel, Grade12, AP 3D Art and Design



LynxSword, Grade11, Ceramics3

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# Drew Elementary School

TEACHER: MARY ANN HERRON



**Colorful Tree**  
Student: Joshua Soto Cueller  
Age: 8  
Grade: 3  
Residence: Arlington, VA

**Picasso Inspired Portrait**  
Student: Anais Lopez Sanchez  
Age: 7  
Grade: 2  
Residence: Arlington, VA



**Imaginary Worlds**  
Student: Nia Gilreath  
Age: 6  
Grade: 1  
Residence: Arlington, VA

## Welcome the the Children's and Teens' Connection 2023

The art and writing of Arlington's students is always a bright spot. We offer many thanks to the art teachers who guided these artists and compiled the art to appear here. You can find the other Children's and Teens' editions by going to <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/PDFs/> and then scrolling down to Children's. Thanks for reading.

Now the Connection will be on a break until after the New Year, with our next publication appearing the week of Jan. 10.

In the meantime contact us, for advertising, contact [debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com) or [sales@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:sales@connectionnewspapers.com). For the newsroom, contact [editors@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:editors@connectionnewspapers.com).

### BULLETIN BOARD

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

### FREE HOLIDAY LYFT RIDES

Preparing to combat that time of year when, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, over a third (36%, Christmas; 40% New Year's Day) of U.S. traffic deaths involve drunk drivers, a local nonprofit organization announced today that free safe rides will be offered to would-be drunk drivers throughout the Washington-area this holiday season.

Offered by the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), the 2023 Holiday SoberRide program will be in operation nightly from 10:00 p.m. until 4:00 a.m. from Friday, December 15, 2023 until Monday, January 1, 2024 as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers during this traditionally high-risk holiday period. Each evening during this six-hour period, area residents ages 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may download the Lyft app to their phones then enter the SoberRide code in the app's 'Payment' tab (under the 'Add Lyft Pass' option) to receive their no-cost (up to \$15) safe transportation home. WRAP's separate 2023 Holiday SoberRide® promo codes will be posted at 9:00 p.m. on December 15, 22 and 31 on [www.SoberRide.com](http://www.SoberRide.com).

## A CHRISTMAS STORY

# Paying Forward a Christmas Miracle

Springfield woman uses personal experience to provide support for women in need this holiday season.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

**O**n Christmas Eve in 2008, under a midnight sky, Kit Wilbon and her two daughters, ages seven and eight years old, lay huddled under two wool blankets in the back of her 1996 station wagon. The lowered rear seat became their bed, mud-splattered sweatshirts served as their pillows. A garbage bag secured with duct tape, covered the shattered front passenger side window, the result of vandalism, was a shield from the chilling temperatures from seeping into the car.

For the first time in 7 years, Wilbon did not attend midnight mass. Her family's Yuletide dinner – once roasted prime rib – was a McDonald's Big Mac cut into thirds and shared among themselves.

"I had to tell my children that we had to choose between toys and food for Christmas," she whispered. "I started crying on Christmas morning when my daughter asked me if the reason she didn't get toys was because Santa couldn't find them because our car didn't have a chimney."

Wilbon's profound sense of loneliness and destitution was the impetus for her ascension from poverty to prosperity and the catalyst for her decision to create a safe space for women experiencing this plight.

"I learned quickly how life can change on a dime and you can have the rug pulled out from under you in an instant and without a warning," recalls Wilbon. "Knowing that you have children who are depending on you, but you can't [assure] them that everything is okay, can punch a hole in your heart."

Wilbon's story begins when her husband left the family making her a single mother. She had no way of contacting him, and he did



PHOTO COURTESY OF KIT WILBON

Kit Wilbon and group Onyx provide support to women in need this holiday season.

not provide didn't provide financial support. Her job as a bartender afforded her a hand-to-mouth lifestyle and a studio apartment in Arlington.

Shortly after Thanksgiving she was laid off and within three weeks she was homeless. Wilbon's Christmas prayer was that the new year would usher in a change in fortune.

Climbing out of her car on the day after Christmas, her two daughters in tow, Wilbon spotted a woman unlocking the door of a hair salon in the strip mall where her car was parked. She approached the woman and asked if she and daughters could use the bathroom.

The woman was Glayds Pierce, the owner of the salon. The Wilbons' tightly coiled, matted hair, the result of weeks of neglect, captured the senses of the stylist.

"It was obvious that she needed help, but I could tell that she had too much pride to ask for it," said Pierce. "It turns out that I needed help too. I had back-to-back clients, but all of my assistants were on vacation for the holiday."

Pierce mentioned to Wilbon that her schedule was jam-packed with clients, but her list of available assistants was nonexistent. She offered Wilbon a job helping to maintain the salon's cleanliness for that day.

"I jokingly told her that she could pay me back for using my bathroom, by working as my assistant that day because I really did need the help," said Pierce. "I could tell that she would not take the job if she thought that I felt sorry for her."

The tasks of salon assistants include sweeping kinky hair clippings, human hair that is used for extensions and the synthetic hair that is used for cornrows, crochet braids and Senegalese twists. Wilbon performed her task fastidiously and worked without complaint. Pierce, impressed by her work ethic, offered her a full time job.

Some call the turn of events serendipitous, but Wilbon calls it God's grace. Her gratitude is obvious as her eyes glisten and her legs bounce as she recalls her journey from poverty to prosperity. "The job sounds menial to some people, but it was life changing for me," she said, tears rolling down her cheeks.

Soon Wilbon earned money to rent a basement in Springfield, a location she chose based on the school district's reputation. She wanted the best education for her children.

Buoyed by encouragement and connections that she received from clients she met at the salon, Wilbon earned bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology

from George Mason.

"I could tell that she had dreams and ambitions, but she had just been beaten down by life," said Gloria King, one of the salon's clients. "She was able to change her life situation because she's resilient."

Soon after finishing her Bachelor's degree, Wilbon and several peers from her psychology program started a support group for women who were facing the plight that she once experienced, a group comprised primarily of women of color.

Each evening during the days between Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve — the period Wilbon experienced hardship — she and fellow hosts, many from her degree program at George Mason organized a child-friendly dinner party for women who are alone and lonely.

Sitting around a table topped with roasted chicken, Brussels sprouts, mashed potatoes, stir fried broccoli and other comfort food, the women share stories about the adversity that they are facing.

"It's helpful for the women to hear that even though they feel lonely, they are not alone, said Terrye O'Neal, a substance-abuse therapist.

The group began with Wilbon and two friends that she met

while working on her Master's degree. It has expanded and now includes women from a variety of professions. There's a gynecologist who specializes in high risk pregnancies, teachers from inner city schools, and mental health professionals who serve low income communities.

The hosts work to educate attendees about self-care and mental health issues. The group helps women in need learn about resources in the community.

Leticia (withholding her last name to protect the safety of herself and her two children) joined the group about two years ago. A victim of domestic violence, she arrived with a broken eye socket that she sustained from a punch to the face.

"I was in pain when I came to the first meeting," said Leticia, "It's not just physical pain, but emotional pain that was way down deep in my soul."

Providing comfort to women who are in need and giving them the boot straps to pull themselves out of their situation is Wilbon's goal.

"I will keep running this group as long as I have breath in my body or there is no longer a need for it," she said. "Whichever comes first."

For more, email Kit Wilbon, kit-wilbononyx@gmail.com

## REAL ESTATE

# Home Sales Poised to Grow

Northern Virginia home sales declined 9.8% from last November, but in positive news, sales increased 12.5% from October 2023. Meanwhile, prices grew higher, up 5.72% from the previous November, reported the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors.

“November data shows that the market continues to adjust ... and we haven’t quite found a new normal. We do know that housing inventory remains limited which drives down home sales. That in turn drives up demand for those limited homes to choose from, which leads to higher home prices,” said NVAR Board Member Casey Menish, Pearson Smith Realty. “I am optimistic that as mortgage rates fall, we will see more people ready to sell their homes, and more buyers ready to pick up their home searches where they left them.”

The months’ supply of inventory for November 2023 was 1.05, up a smidge (.3%) from last November but down from October 2023’s 1.23 months. The average days on the market in November was 20, down significantly (23.08%) from last November but a little higher than October 2023’s 17 days.

Homebuyers continued to have few options and that meant higher prices. The median sold price for a home in November 2023 was \$656,500, up 5.72% from November 2022. This is an increase compared to the (pre-pandemic) November 2019 median sold price of \$538,250.

This was a drop from October 2023’s median sold price which was \$670,000.

“Our just released economic housing forecast noted that we expect home values to continue to increase due to historic low housing inventories across the region. But we remain hopeful that recent spikes in mortgage rates will moderate and stabilize and help create ownership opportunities,” said Ryan McLaughlin, CEO, NVAR.

NVAR’s newly released 2024 economic housing forecast, produced in conjunction with George Mason University’s Center for Regional Analysis, revealed that the residential and commercial real estate market has not yet reached a post-pandemic normal. The forecast reported a possible downturn despite the economy attracting regional workers and creating jobs. As such, overall sales activity is expected to decline in 2024. Another Covid outcome cited in the

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NVAR REGION	AVERAGE	MEDIAN	HOME SALES
	\$780,193 +9.2%	\$656,500 +5.7%	1,054 -9.8%
FAIRFAX COUNTY	\$774,548 +6.5%	\$659,994 +5.2%	734 -13.7%
FAIRFAX CITY	\$644,716 -28.7%	\$815,857 -25.1%	15 0%
FALLS CHURCH	\$805,583 +2.1%	\$780,000 +7.3%	12 +71.4%
ARLINGTON	\$896,981 +30.1%	\$712,500 +21.5%	168 -0.6%
ALEXANDRIA	\$670,204 +5.6%	\$595,000 +13.3%	125 -2.3%

forecast was an increase in intra-regional migration patterns—especially to distant suburbs—spurred by more work-from-home options.

### BACKGROUND

The Northern Virginia Association of Realtors reports on home sales activity for Fairfax and Arlington counties, the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church and the towns of Vienna, Herndon, and Clifton. Below is November 2023 regional home sales compared to November 2022 for Northern Virginia with data derived from Bright MLS as of Dec. 12, 2023 (total sales and listings may not include garage/parking spaces):

The number of closed sales in November 2023 was 1,054 units. This was down 9.8% compared to November 2022 and up 12.5% compared to October 2023. The number of closed sales is also down compared to (pre-pandemic) November 2019, when there were 1,430 closed sales.

The sold volume in November 2023 was \$827,129,148. This was down 1.6% compared to November 2022. This number is down compared to (pre-pandemic) November 2019, when it was \$902,535,923.

The average sold price for a home in November 2023 was \$780,193, up 9.20% from November 2022 but significantly more than November 2019 (pre-pandemic), when the average sold price was \$625,860.

The number of active listings in November 2023 was 1,407, down 23.86% from November 2022, when there were 1,848 listings. This number was down from November 2019 (pre-pandemic) when the number of active listings was 1,992.

Pending sales in November 2023 were 996, down 19.02% compared to November 2022.

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**Legals**

### Notice of Availability for a Finding of No Significant Impact for an Environmental Assessment for Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia

The Department of the Army, in conjunction with Army National Military Cemeteries, gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to evaluate the potential impacts on the human and natural environment due to implementing the Congressionally-mandated removal of the bronze elements of the Confederate Memorial, located in Section 16 of Arlington National Cemetery. The EA was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality regulations and Army-specific NEPA requirements. The EA analyzed the effects of the discretionary elements of the proposed action, including how to disassemble the Confederate Memorial.

Based on the EA, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been issued and a determination made that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

The signed FONSI and EA are available at: <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/About/Confederate-Memorial-Removal>. Interested parties may also view a copy of the EA/FONSI at the Arlington Public Library, Central Library, located at 1015 North Quincy Street, Arlington, VA, 22201. The EA/FONSI will be available for 60 days.

**CALENDAR**

4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

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**Employment**

i360 Holdings, LLC in Arlington, VA seeks a QA Automation Engineer to create test plants, automated and manual tests, test code, and test scripts. Telecommuting permitted up to 1 day per week. To apply, send resume to [azura.gao@kochcc.com](mailto:azura.gao@kochcc.com). Please include Job Number 150192 in the subject line.

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# The Arlington Connection

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First Night Alexandria takes place on Sunday, Dec. 31, 2023 in Old Town Alexandria.

## DEC. 9 TO JAN. 6, 2024

**“Snow Maiden.”** At Synetic Theatre, 1800 S. Bell Street, Arlington. In a frozen silver forest high in the mountains, a lonely boy builds a girl from snow. When she mysteriously comes to life, mischief, laughter, and enchantment abound. But what will happen when the ice begins to melt? Visit [www.synetictheater.org](http://www.synetictheater.org).

## NOV. 27 TO DEC. 29

**December at Gallery Underground: Color | Up Close & Personal.** Marcia Katz, Judy Landry, and Sally Slifkin have been painting together for several years. All three artists have been active members of the Arlington Artists Alliance for many years as well. Though they have found that their artistic styles are distinctly different, each has always been very interested in color. Their interests range from how certain colors work next to each other, to unique color choices representing light and shadow, to articulating how a painting comes alive using color.

## LIGHT THE WORLD GIVING MACHINES

For the second year in a row, Ballston Quarter in Arlington is one of 61 locations around the world getting a unique chance to support local and global charities with the Light The World Giving Machines. The Giving Machines are just like regular vending machines but with a twist. Instead of swiping your card and receiving a treat for yourself, the Light the World Giving Machines allow individuals to swipe their card and donate products and services to charities in the DMV and around the world. The Giving Machines will be located at Ballston Quarter, 4238 Wilson Blvd. in Arlington.

## SUNDAY/DEC. 31

**First Night Alexandria.** In locations around Old Town Alexandria. First Night Alexandria, known as the largest family-friendly and affordable New Year's Eve festival of music and more event in the region, returns with its day into night of celebration showcasing performing arts throughout Old Town. The annual event (in its 29th year) will feature a variety of activities, activations, dance parties, live music and more. The festivities kick off at 2:00 p.m. and conclude at midnight as thousands welcome in the New Year.

A tradition that started in 1994, First Night Alexandria.org

alexandria has become a staple in the region to bring in the New Year as an affordable event filled with a lineup of entertainment and activities. Proceeds from the event supports Alexandria's middle and high school students' activities with a musical background in choir, orchestra, and band.

### New this Year:

**Twilight Fireworks** - This year's celebration will feature a twilight fireworks display at 6 p.m. on Alexandria's waterfront geared to families who want to enjoy the show with their kids and loved ones. First Night Alexandria will also still host an abbreviated encore display of the New Year's fireworks at midnight on the waterfront.

**Fun Hunt** - Add adventure, exploration, and education to the last day of the year! After 5 years, the Fun Hunt returns with new ways to enjoy an afternoon in Old Town Alexandria. Ticketed guests have the opportunity to turn a day of Fun and entertainment into potential prize winnings. The adventure concludes at the Block Party at Market Square just prior to the Twilight Fireworks.

**Daytime Block Party** - Join us at Market Square from 4 - 6 p.m. for a time of music, a "Cool Happy New Year" demonstration and special fun just prior to the new Twilight fireworks display.

For more information visit [www.firstnightalexandria.org](http://www.firstnightalexandria.org).

## JAN. 3-26

**Arlington Artists Alliance Board: Above & Beyond.** At Gallery Underground, Arlington. Gallery Underground presents Arlington Artists Alliance Board: Above & Beyond, a group show in appreciation of our hard-working Board members. The Alliance Board members will include their favorite artworks and/or pieces that best exemplify their varied styles and medium. They often work tirelessly behind the scenes, so this group show will highlight their efforts and showcase their artistic talents. The opening reception and awards ceremony will be on Friday, January 5th from 5-7 p.m.

## SATURDAY/JAN. 6

**Comedy Karaoke Trivia Funtime Show.** 7:30

p.m. At Highline RxR, 2010 Crystal Drive, Arlington. Bring a team or fly solo and win prizes by dropping knowledge in a trivia competition, then duking it out in a karaoke battle. Hosted by Christian Hunt, this amazing experience features comedy from the D.C. area's finest comics. The headliner for January's show is the hilarious Josh Kuderna!

## SUNDAY/JAN. 7

**BikeArlington Presents: The Notorious ARL Bike Ride.** 1 - 4 p.m. Back by popular demand, this 18-mile bike tour will traverse trails and streets all over Arlington that have played a role in the county's sordid and unseemly past. Stops include the site where former spy Robert Hanssen picked up a trash bag of \$50,000 from the Russians, the former workplace of femme fatale Lorena Bobbit, and the Deep Throat parking garage that factored prominently into the Watergate scandal. Henry Dunbar, former BikeArlington staff and longtime Arlington resident, will lead the group and provide the backstory on the county's most notorious people and places. This ride is a three-hour, 18-mile ride that includes time riding on trails and streets. It also has some hills. Participants should be comfortable riding on busier streets with traffic and be comfortable riding longer distances. To register, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-notorious-arlbike-ride-tickets-764804419607>

## FRIDAY/JAN. 12

**Selecting Native Plants for the Home Garden.** 10:00 - 11:30 a.m., Online. In this introductory overview of native plants, Extension Master Gardener Elaine Mills introduces species for the Mid-Atlantic region (from trees to ground covers) that attract and support our local pollinators, butterflies, moths, and birds. She explains how to choose beautiful native plants appropriate for the conditions of your yard, describing their use in layered forest settings; in lawns, hedgerows, and foundations; and garden beds for wildlife. She also discusses how "straight species" of native plants differ from cultivars and provides you with tips and best practices for planting and seasonal management. Free. RSVP at <http://mgnv.org/rsvp-for-public-education-classes/> to receive a link to participate.

## A Complete Whiff



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As a longtime married man, I can speak to the various responsibilities that one another has to help nurture/maintain the framework that "Keeps Hope Alive," to invoke Jesse Jackson - out of context, that any relationship needs to thrive. For my wife Dina and I, as it pertains to the subject matter at hand/inner workings of our marriage, one very clear delineation exists: Dina handles the social, I handle the business/money. Sometimes however, the twain can be on different twacks (as my later father would always joke), even with the best of intentions. Getting the tracks to coalesce into one takes patience, courage, conviction, and most importantly, accommodation.

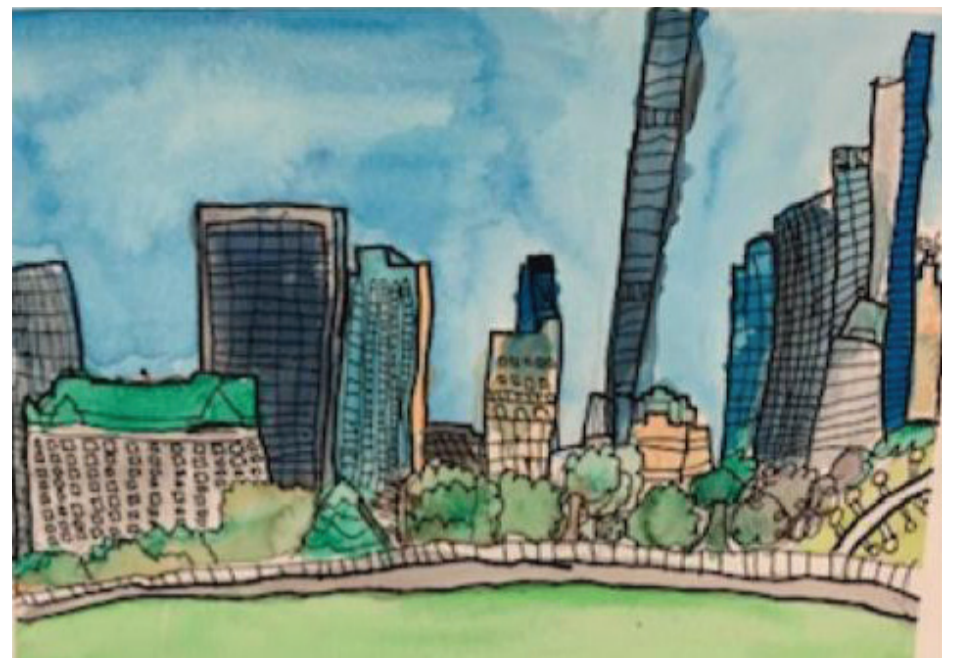
And it was in this context that I prepare you readers for something specifically to do with yours truly. What I am about to divulge is/was 100% my fault. Being responsible for the business/money side of the marriage means that I am expected to be organized concerning how much money is coming in, and most importantly, how much is going out, and moreover, when pay or play options are feasible/prudent. Meaning, I know how much money is due when certain relatively important bills arrive. In addition to the monthly recurring obligations, this also means I'm to be aware of the ones due less frequently (quarterly, semiannually, and of course, annually). And then there's other category of bills which require not so much payment as they do require a renewal. The renewal that I refer to now is for our health insurance, a special health insurance that because of means and/or seriousness of condition (cancer qualifies) enables me to not incur any costs for drugs, co-pays, co-insurance et cetera. As you might imagine for a cancer patient nearing his 15th year under the proverbial gun so to speak, there are regular/recurring costs associated with my care and now is no time to decide care options based on money/ability to pay, instead of what the doctor recommends. Simply stated: my life might very well be at stake, certainly it might be at risk. And yet, this is exactly what I did. I completely forgot to submit our annual renewal due Sept 1-ish for an Oct. 1-ish restart date. It didn't hit me until I went to check in with the receptionist for the PET scan, I had scheduled for Nov. 27 that I was told I had a co-pay due. (The other part of this story being the anxiety about the results and all I wrote about in the column entitled: "Uncertainty.") "Co-pay due? I just signed up for this in September," I said. That's when I was told that my plan had expired in Sept. because I hadn't renewed it for the '23-'24 year. I was off by three months or so. I totally missed the deadline. I don't begrudge the health insurance for not reminding me. Nor do I think Dina should have said something. This was on me, totally. There's no more important business in a family than its health insurance, particularly when one of its payors/covered individuals has been diagnosed originally with "terminal" cancer. I mean cancer is not exactly the kind of thing that goes away on its own. Often, when it goes away, it takes the patient with it.

Moreover, as a former insurance broker, I am aware of the costs and consequences of neglecting one's insurance responsibilities. And if one is not an experienced agent as I was, there's plenty of news stories and articles available online about devastating decisions that some families have had to make between rent, food, and buying drugs needed to keep them alive. And when the receptionist advised me of my plan's expiration (or my participation in it, I should say), it was the furthest thing from my mind. I was not thinking at all about having to renew/re-apply at all. Not that I thought for second that it was an automatic self-renewing kind of coverage (I knew it wasn't). It was just as we used to say in the back yard, whiffle bat in hand after missing the whiffle ball: "a complete whiff."

It's not exactly a total disaster, I/we still have health insurance, And I can re-apply for this special plan at any time; I will just have incurred unnecessary expenses in the interim. Hopefully, there won't be too many cancer-related decisions that cost us money until I'm able to re-qualify (it's hardly guaranteed). I just hope that Dina stays in her lane and doesn't veer from the social lane into my business lane. I never really planned it this way. I tried in the early days of our marriage to never make the decisions without consulting the manual (my wife). However, over time and over wrought, it became clear to me that since she was minding her business, I should be minding mine, except her business was social; mine was business - with some potential real world consequences, unfortunately.

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

# KENMORE MIDDLE SCHOOL



**Age 13, Grade 8, Kenmore Middle School, Arlington, Virginia**  
New York City, ... big and loud, ... walking along and looking up at the Empire State Building, ... skyscrapers on the edge of the world, ... street vendors and the smell of pizza, ...

**Ashley Hernandez Alfaro**

**Age 13, Grade 8, Kenmore Middle School, Arlington, Virginia**

Imagine your first day of a new school, not knowing where to go, how to ask for help, and especially not knowing the language that everyone is speaking. Being the only one that doesn't understand what everyone is saying. My old school will always be that place that I will never forget. I will never forget when I met my best friend, when I learned English for the first time, and finally I will always remember when I learned to never give up in my life. I would like to let people know how important and special our schools are. It is a place where you feel free and happy where you have fun every day. At school you learn things that you haven't learned before. I love being in school, and I hope that other people like to be in school just like me.



**Emely Fuentes Hernandez**

**Age 13, Grade 8, Kenmore Middle School, Arlington, Virginia**

Pine trees gathered around a rocky river, ... the smell of the grass, ... birds singing, ... the sound of the water, ... finally spending time with my siblings, ... unforgettable beautiful nature, ... throwing back baby fish for them to make more fish to catch, ... happy to share this moment and not be an only child...



**Fabiola Genesis Corea Funez**

**Age 13, Grade 8, Kenmore Middle School, Arlington, Virginia**

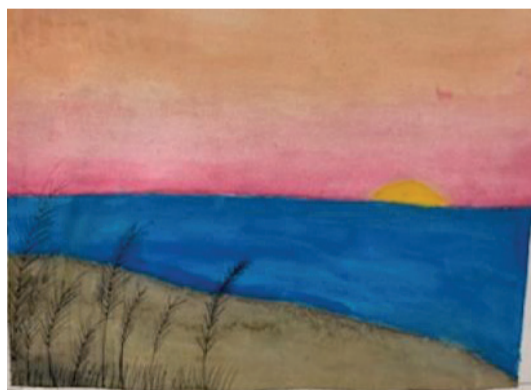
Cool air and sunny pastel colors hitting the Caribbean Sea reflecting in its warm temperatures, the memorable scent of delicious Honduran food, and music filling the air while my family was dancing and singing ...



**Natalia Colocho Mejia**

**Age 13, Grade 8, Kenmore Middle School, Arlington, Virginia**

Playing in the sand under the beautiful sunset of El Salvador



**Danna Rivera Rodriguez**

**Age 13, Grade 8, Kenmore Middle School, Arlington, Virginia**

**Marcos Gomez Canales**  
**Age 13, Grade 8, Kenmore Middle School, Arlington, Virginia**

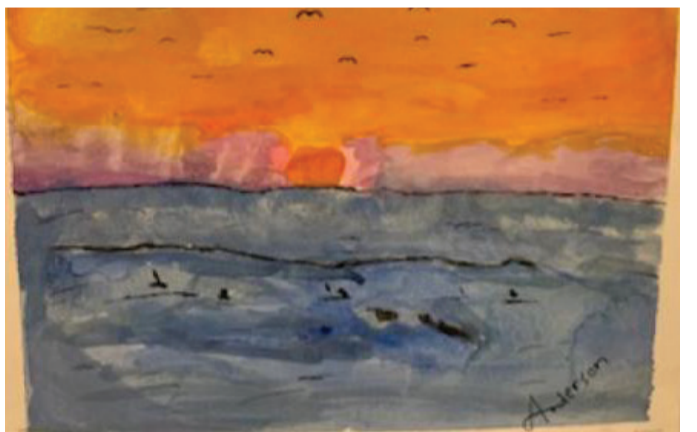
On the beach with some palms aside of you and the sun shining down, ... the waves moving, ... the small town of San Miguel, with its active volcano, ... walking to my grandma's house, ... fun festivals with scary clowns, ... delicious pupusas with loroco, ... I miss being scared by the clowns



**Eshal Khan**

**Age 13, Grade 8, Kenmore Middle School, Arlington, Virginia**

Kings Dominion ... riding the roller coaster slowly up and rushing down fast, ... the smell of freshly made French fries blowing in the breeze, ... and laughing at my sister sitting beside me screaming ...



**Anderson Estip Juarez Cabezas**

**Age 13, Grade 8, Kenmore Middle School, Arlington, Virginia**

Virginia Beach ... standing in a boat feeling the tug of a big fish biting the hook, ... reeling in a red drum fish, ... cooking the fish we caught, ... walking along the beach finding baby crabs, ... laughing and relaxing with family ...

