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Fairfax CONNECTION


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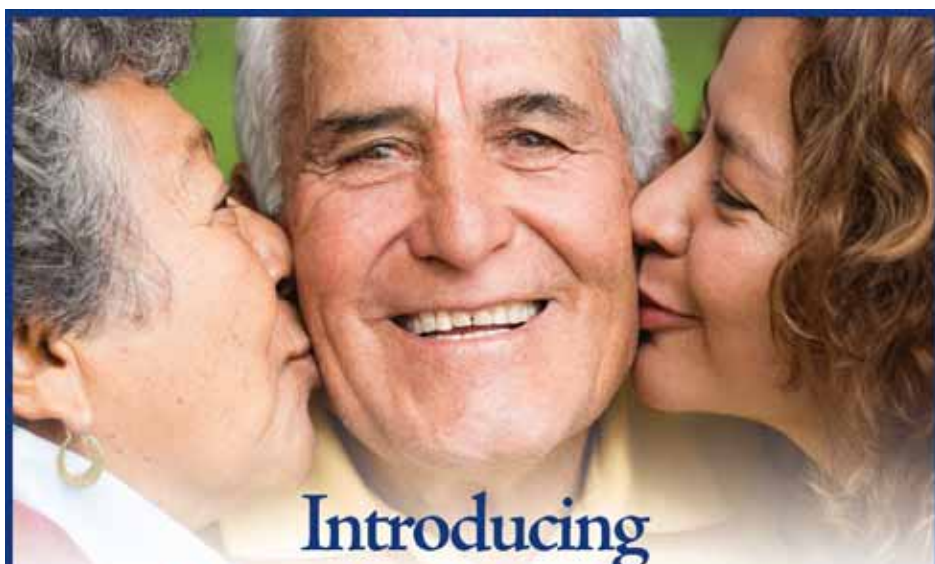
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Saturday, March 18

1 pm to 3 pm

Co-sponsored by Supervisor Linda Smyth and Oakton HS Marketing Department

South County Secondary School

Saturday, April 29

11 am to 1 pm

Co-sponsored by Supervisor Dan Storck, South Fairfax Chamber of Commerce, South County Federation, and South County Secondary School

To register as an employer or student, or for more information, please visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/springfield/teenjobfair.htm

Official City Seal Plus a New Logo

Council approves where each identifier will be used.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Now that Fairfax has decided to go forward with two logos for the City, it has also determined when to use the official seal and when the new, more modern logo will be applied. The City seal will be designated for official, legal and governmental purposes, while the sleek new one is earmarked for promoting and advertising the City.

City Council gave the go-ahead during its work session last Tuesday, Feb. 14. First, though, it discussed the matter at its Jan. 3 work session.

Economic Development Director Chris Bruno explained that, throughout 2016, a City branding committee worked with marketing firm, Gensler, to design and develop a new logo and stylistic identity for Fairfax. Various community stakeholders, City staff and Council members also provided input.

IN JANUARY, City Manager Bob Sisson told the Council, “We should think specifically about which signage, buildings and City equipment should have the new logo mark on them.” However, he added, “All public-safety signs would stay the same, as would City Hall signs.”

“I’m a traditionalist with regard to the City seal, and I don’t know whether we should have a new, stylized logo on City signs, and the City seal on City vehicles,” said Sisson. “So Council needs to provide some additional clarity on this, going forward.”

“It’s important for us to have a consistent brand when marketing the City,” said Councilwoman Ellie Schmidt. “I’m a traditionalist, too, but I think it’s worth giving the new logo a try.”

Sisson said one of the first things Fairfax should determine is what name to have on the city-limit sign on the entrance to the City. “Is it City of Fairfax or Fairfax City?” he asked.

Councilman Michael DeMarco wondered if calling the City by two names would create conflict, from a branding perspective. But Bruno said it hasn’t done so in other jurisdictions doing the same thing.



The official City seal will still be used.

“We started this discussion because we were inconsistent with different signs in different places,” said Councilman Jeff Greenfield. “But I’m not comfortable changing everything, and I’m not ashamed that we’re the City of Fairfax. And it would have an economic impact and cost a lot of money to change [all] the signs.”

Then-Councilman David Meyer said he, too, preferred City of Fairfax, and he wasn’t completely clear how have a new logo would make the City more marketable. And Councilwoman Janice Miller said, “Maybe big-ticket items, like City signs, shouldn’t change.”

“We need consistency, but I’m OK with a duality, using each name for specific purposes – one, official, and one, for marketing,” said DeMarco. “We should move forward with some kind of place branding for the City of Fairfax. A lot of people outside the City limits don’t know where the City begins and ends. If we don’t do something more than a logo or tagline, then we’ll lose that identity. It’ll help us stay competitive in the marketplace.”

Previously, the Council chose “Live Life Connected” as the City’s slogan, and DeMarco said Fairfax could use it to develop marketing strategies. “We need strong brand guidelines, a plan and a timeline, and we should know the costs,” he said. “So I think we should move forward with it, if we’re serious about marketing the City.” Miller said she favors the new logo with City of Fairfax in the middle and the slogan underneath.



The City’s new, promotional and marketing logo.

Then-Mayor Steve Stombres said he likes saying, “City of Fairfax,” but acknowledged that people say “Fairfax City” in common usage. And while noting that he likes the City’s seal and its history, he said he also likes the new logo’s “three-dimensional, blue border. It appeals to me, and I think it does to the younger generation in Fairfax.”

He also said the entrance signs should read City of Fairfax because “It tends to differentiate us from the county.” But he was fine with using the new logo to promote the City and recommended City staff develop a pamphlet detailing exactly where to use the seal and where to use the logo. Bruno said the consultant also created a guide dealing with this matter.

Sisson said he’d re-look at these elements with Bruno and with Parks and Recreation Director Cathy Salgado, make changes and bring them back to the Council soon, which he did on Feb. 14. At the outset, Bruno said they were presenting the final draft of the brand-use guidelines, along with instructions on how to use the promotional logo and when to use the official City seal.

He also stressed to the Council that there’s no proposal to legally change the name of the City. For official government functions and business, City of Fairfax will still be used. “The new logo would be used for friendlier, more informal and promotional uses,” said Bruno. “I want your input whether we should go forward with both seals or just one.”

❖ The guidelines given to the Council members specified which seal would go

where. The City seal would be used on the City flag; letterhead stationery used for official purposes; legislative/policy announcements, ordinances and resolutions; contracts and agreements; taxes, bills and licenses; and official intradepartmental communications. It would also be used on business cards for elected and appointed officials; ID badges for code-enforcement, police, fire and school employees; cable TV broadcasts of government meetings; City fleet vehicles and permanent signage – all City building signs, including historic buildings, City entrance signs and park signs. The police and fire departments will retain their current logos which incorporate components of the City seal.

❖ The new logo would be used for electronic and print correspondence; social media and Websites, department correspondence and email signatures; uniforms for civilian employees (excluding police and firefighters); and promotional marketing such as banners, temporary signs, City maps, event flyers and signage, facility-rental materials and economic development materials. It would be used, as well, for promotional merchandise, public-outreach documents to obtain citizen input; department business cards and ID badges (excluding the ones requiring the City seal).

“None of the City signs have the City seal on them now,” said Schmidt. “Does this mean that, as they’re replaced, the City seal would be placed on them?” Sisson answered affirmatively, and Schmidt replied, “As long as we’re consistent as to how we apply the usage, I’m fine having two seals.”

DeMarco preferred that the parks bear the promotional logo, adding, “We need promotional activities and a marketing program to help us market the City. If we’re serious about drawing in new businesses, we need to commit to more resources and a marketing campaign to ensure success.” He then suggested discussing it further at a retreat, and Miller said the Economic Development Authority should be included.

Agreeing, Schmidt said, “We’ve talked about branding a lot, and I think we should move on.” As mayor, Meyer then told Bruno to go forward “with this portion of the branding initiative.”

A Glimpse at Some City CIP Requests

Department heads present wish lists.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Next Tuesday, Feb. 28, City Manager Bob Sisson will present his proposed FY ’18 budget for the City of Fairfax. Among other things, it will include funds for some of the Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) requested by various City entities.

These requests were presented at a joint work session of City Council and the Planning Commission, and speaking were representatives of the City schools and the Fire, Police, Information Technology, Parks and Recreation, and Public Works departments. Whether they’ll be fulfilled won’t be known until the new budget is actually approved.

❖ Fire Chief John O’Neal asked for \$280,000 for just one item, this fiscal year – the continuation of the traffic-preemption upgrade that began a few years ago. It upgrades apparatus and intersections to GPS traffic-preemption technology to improve safety of responders and citizens, plus po-

tentially reduce emergency-response times.

❖ Presenting the Police Department’s request were Capt. Mitch Johnson and Maj. K.C. Caldwell. First was \$991,000 for a mobile and portable radio upgrade. “Our current radio hardware is reaching its end of life, we can’t get replacement parts for it and it won’t work with the new Fairfax County [communication] system,” explained Caldwell.



David Summers



Cathy Salgado



Peter Noonan

Needed are 80 portable and 61 mobile radios. Johnson said it’s “cheaper to buy the radios all at once and to have them all on the same software patches.” And Caldwell

SEE A GLIMPSE, PAGE 4

Dentist Corner

—Evelyn Samuel, DMD

Q. How can I prevent white spots after my braces are taken off?

A. Most people are generally excited about having braces removed. When working toward the goal of having that ideal smile, straight teeth, this day is long awaited. But what if after every bracket is removed, there are white spots and what is the cause of them? Due to the nature of braces, metal brackets and arch wires, it becomes somewhat more difficult to clean the teeth. Plaque may accumulate and food may easily become entrapped. Nonetheless, good oral hygiene is very important. Plaque contains bacteria which can cause cavities, bad breath, and damage the enamel around the braces leaving white spots (decalcification) on the teeth. To prevent this from occurring one must keep the teeth extremely clean. Brushing and flossing are recommended in the morning, at night, and within five minutes after each meal, even snacking. Flossing is necessary, as brushing alone may not remove plaque and food debris between teeth. There are several over the counter flossing agents that may be used with braces. Floss threaders, super-floss, and proxabrushes are all reliable interdental agents that get underneath the braces and in between the teeth. Remarkable results can be achieved with concentration on keeping braces as clean as possible and seeing the dentist for regular check ups and cleanings. Have a dental question? Email your question to info@drevelysamuel.com

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NEWS

A Glimpse at Some City of Fairfax CIP Requests

FROM PAGE 3

noted that City police would be able to communicate with other jurisdictions, too, and most of their exchanges would be encrypted.

Also needed is \$174,200 to replace three cruisers and a motorcycle for patrol, plus \$78,784 to maintain the current IT program, replace servers and network devices and purchase and replace storage devices. As of Feb. 1, all the 911 servers were upgraded to log directly into the county's 911 system at its emergency-operations headquarters and also into a secondary path to the county in case the main system goes down.

Police also requested \$25,000 for year two of a multi-year, police headquarters security system upgrade. Analog cameras must be replaced with digital ones to increase video backup.

Information Technology Director Mark Perry said the virtual server system will reach its end of life in 2019, as will the data storage system in 2020, so he asked for \$400,000 between FY 18-22, with \$100,000 of it needed now. "We're going to shrink the size of our storage system so we can save on power, heating, air condition-

ing and space," he said. And in conjunction with the upgrade of the Police Department's 911 system from analog to digital, Perry requested \$150,000.

Parks and Recreation Director Cathy Salgado had several items on her wish list, including five new projects: Providence Park rectangular field renovation, \$100,000; Thaiss Park field renovation, \$50,000; ADA compliance in parks, \$125,000; a Toro utility vehicle, \$30,000; and Ashby Pond dredging, \$200,000. Also requested was \$50,000 for design and construction of a dog park.

"We're focusing on safety, maintenance and accessibility, as well as playground replacements for the ones that don't meet ADA requirements," she said. Regarding the dog park, Salgado said, "A lot of people want one here. It involves fencing, signage, access to water and parking and doesn't cost very much to construct."

She said the money for Ashby Pond is to remove the remaining silt left in it after it was built in 2011. "About 1,500 cubic yards of silt are left, and more is building up," explained Salgado. "We'd like to meet with an engineer about it

and develop a better plan for the pond."

Public Works Director David Summers requested money for several projects, saying the majority involved maintenance, plus some repairs. Some \$1.6 million is needed for the concrete curb and gutter maintenance that must be done before streets are milled and paved.

Also included is \$160,000 to install streetlights on George Mason Boulevard, \$2.1 million for street repaving, \$5.6 million toward upgrading the Noman Cole wastewater treatment plant, \$125,000 to video-inspect storm-water drainage lines to prioritize repairs, \$430,000 to do neighborhood drainage projects where there's been flooding, and \$150,000 to add a sidewalk on the west side of University Drive from Wood Road to Stratford Avenue.

School Superintendent Peter Noonan described his requests for the City's schools as "responsive and needs-based." They include \$25,000 for paving repairs to parking areas and bus loops at all four schools; \$20,000 for concrete curb, gutter and sidewalk repairs at the schools; and \$69,165 to re-

place air-conditioning and/or heating-unit components at the schools, as needed.

He also requested \$15,000 for ongoing roof maintenance at Lanier Middle and Fairfax High schools; \$75,000 for stucco repairs at Fairfax High; \$139,100 to eventually replace the more than 30-year-old elevator at Lanier; \$72,000 to replace the carpets at Daniels Run and Providence elementaries with tile; \$80,000 to extend the lighting further up Rebel Run and upgrade it to provide better nighttime lighting there; and \$35,000 for unforeseen equipment repairs and replacements in the schools.

Lastly, Finance Director David Hodgkins his needs assessment and told the funding needed. It included \$75,000 for a 64-80 niche columbarium to add more burial sites without acquiring new land, \$70,000 to complete the stabilization and restoration project at the Blenheim House and \$200,000 to upgrade accounting and human-resources software that was originally implemented in 2006. Hodgkins described it as "old and antiquated and past its useful life."



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Matching Pets to Their Owners

Animal shelters' counselors help families find the right fit for a pet. **Recommended Reading**

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Natasha had been abandoned and was wandering the streets of Arlington under the blaze of a hot summer sun when she was rescued and taken to a local shelter. When handlers at the shelter leashed the German Shepherd mix, she became aggressive with other animals. After months of behavior classes, however, she began to trust and her pugnacious disposition became docile. Within months, Natasha was adopted by a family with small children.

"Most people wouldn't think of a German Shepherd as a kid-friendly dog, but that's a great example of how by taking a dog at their face value and looking at their personality rather than their breed, you can end up with a great dog that you wouldn't have thought of before," said Chelsea Lindsey, communications specialist for the Animal Welfare League of Arlington.

Lindsey says that Natasha's adoption dispels a common misconception that certain breeds are better suited than others for families with children. Lindsey and other shelter counselors say that when selecting a family pet, parents should consider factors such as the animal's temperament and the family's ability to afford and care for a dog properly.

"We don't say there are breeds that are better with kids than others. Some pit bulls are great with kids and some aren't," said Lindsey. "You really have to look at the individual personality of the dog. Are they going to let kids tug on their ear or take away their toys? Just because a dog is a lab or golden retriever doesn't mean that they're going to be good with kids."

Before selecting a pet, families should do an assessment of their ability to give the new pet proper socialization, training, exercise, and attention. "You have to be realistic and honest with yourself," said Lindsey. "Puppies are appealing and hard to turn down, but they're a lot of work. Maybe your family is looking for an adult dog that is already house trained."

One of the first steps to successful pet ownership is beginning with an animal that is the right fit. Counselors are on hand at local shelters to help with the adoptions process. "We want to understand your family's environment and match it up with the best dog," said Gina Lynch, outreach coordinator for the Humane Society of Fairfax County, Inc. "Half the people who walk in to adopt a specific dog end up adopting something else after they talk to a counselor. You might want a puppy, for example, but if you're gone a lot during the day, an older dog that doesn't need as much attention might be a better match."

"When anyone adopts a dog, it's important to work closely with the counselors who know the dog best, so they can tell you about any personality issues," continued Lynch. "If a dog has recently lost its owners, for example, it might be depressed."

Becoming familiar with an animal's history before deciding to adopt is one of the recommendations

Lynch offers. "It's like when you buy a used car, you want to know all you can about the car so that you can be an informed buyer," she said.

One-on-one counseling for families to help with the adjustment of adding a pet to a family is recommended, says Lynch. "We teach families that dogs have to have their own space and an area to eat," she said. "We want to give the best advice to make it a good situation. That's why the whole family has to be there. Until the dog gets used to your household, it's best to give the animal their space."

Often, young children don't have the emotional maturity necessary to control their feelings or the skill set and physical strength needed to care for an animal, says Lynch, so interactions with family pets must be observed closely by a parent to help ensure safety.

"With regard to bringing a pet home, supervision is key in all interactions to make sure that both the child and the animal are safe and comfortable and being handled appropriately," said Joanna Fortin, community outreach and adoptions manager for the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria. "It can take weeks to months to get acclimated, particularly if the pet hasn't lived with a child before. We encourage

parents to be vigilant for a few months. We advise them about the potential issues that could arise so that they can coexist peacefully."

"When the family does bring the animal home, we do encourage people to use caution around

food, toys or other items of high value to the dog," added Fortin. "Proactively setting boundaries with the child, like [not] touching [the dog] when he's eating or taking toys out of his mouth. Respecting those boundaries can generally set them up for success."

Parents must watch vigilantly for the signs that a new family pet is uncomfortable or fearful, says Fortin. "Those signs include growling, avoidance, like the animal choosing to keep its distance, or things that they're visually communicating like looking fearful. Most of the time the dog will give lots and lots of warning before it bites," she said. "Children should use proper behavior and not be too loud or too rough with the animal. There is a potential for an injury to occur, but that is not the norm."

"Kids often want to watch the dog eat, which is fine as long as they stay at an appropriate distance and respect the dog's boundaries," continued Lynch. "Just like you don't want a dog eating off your plate at the table, a dog doesn't want you trying to pull his food away from him."

There is a return on the significant investment that goes into animal adoption with benefits ranging from self-confidence to communications skills development. "Pet ownership teaches kids about responsibility if they are actively taking part in [caring for] the animal," said Lindsey. "It teaches them compassion. They learn to listen and pay attention to non-verbal cues because they don't speak the same language as the animal. Kids who grow up with animals in their homes are also more aware of animal welfare issues."

For those considering adopting a pet, see www.livingwithkidsanddogs.com/.

"We want to understand your family's environment and match it up with the best dog."

— Gina Lynch, Outreach Coordinator,
Humane Society of Fairfax County, Inc.

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OPINION

Budget Season in Fairfax County

Attend a town hall meeting and express your priorities.

Alexandria and Arlington each have a meals tax, both enacted without a referendum because as urban forms of government in Virginia, their local elected bodies were authorized to enact the tax legislatively.

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors had to put the meals tax on the ballot for voters to decide, and after a heated campaign, the tax was voted down decisively.

Elections have consequences, a fact being affirmed on every level right now.

In Fairfax County, this means a more difficult budget process going forward than might otherwise have been the case. The vast majority of Fairfax County's \$3.99 billion budget is financed by property taxes, and the proposed budget is based on no property tax increase.

The meals tax would have provided about \$80 million for the schools; the current budget falls \$61 million short of the FCPS request.

While County Executive Ed Long has said there can be no new programs in the budget defined by no tax increase, we all know that some things could be cut to make room for new, needed programs. Long will conduct an online chat answer budget questions on Friday, Feb. 24, at 3 p.m. Submit questions here: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/AskFairfax/mobile/ActiveDiscussion.aspx?roomid=131

The county will hold a series of budget town hall meetings which will include a presentation, time for questions and feedback.

The Connection welcomes letters for publication on the budget, send to editors@connectionnewspapers.com

EDITORIAL

FAIRFAX COUNTY BUDGET TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Tuesday, Feb. 21 - 7:30 p.m., Great Falls Citizens Association, Great Falls Library - 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls

Saturday, March 4 - 9 a.m., Hunter Mill District Community Meeting, Frying Pan Park, Visitors Center - 2739 West Ox Road, Herndon

Wednesday, March 8 - 7 p.m., Providence Community Budget Meeting, Providence Community Center - 3001 Vaden Drive, Fairfax. - First Floor Multipurpose Rooms

Wednesday, March 8 - 7 p.m., Sully District Budget

Town Hall Meeting, Rocky Run Middle School - 4400 Stringfellow Road, Chantilly

Thursday, March 9 - 7 p.m., Mason District Budget Town Hall Meeting, Mason District Government Center, 6507 Columbia Pike, Annandale - Main Community Room

Thursday, March 16 - 7:30 p.m., McLean Budget Public Meeting, McLean Community Center - 1234 Ingleside Avenue, McLean.

Monday, March 20 - 7 p.m., Springfield District Budget Town Hall Meeting, West Springfield Government Center - 6140 Rolling Road, Springfield - Community Room

Wednesday, March 22 - 7 p.m., Lee District Budget Town Hall Meeting, Franconia Governmental Center - 6121 Franconia Road, Alexandria

Monday, March 27 - 7:30 p.m., Braddock District Budget Town Hall Meeting, Robinson Secondary School - Recital Hall - 5035 Sideburn Road, Fairfax.

Correction

Last week's editorial implied that in November 2017, the Virginia Senate will be on the ballot. The 40 seats in the Virginia Senate will next be on the ballot in November 2019. All 100 seats in the House of Delegates are on the ballot this November, 2017, along with Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General.

— MARY KIMM

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Coal Ash Bill Passes

BY SCOTT SUROVELL
STATE SENATOR (D-36)

We have one week to go in session and negotiations are rapidly reaching conclusion as we push to finish our work so we can get back to our families and our jobs.

This past week, my legislation to raise Virginia's threshold between misdemeanors and felonies from \$200 to \$500 failed.

Virginia's threshold has not changed since 1981. Our existing system unnecessarily focuses police and prosecutors on minor crimes instead of violent crime while tainting thousands of Virginia's suffering from depression or drug addiction with felony charges for life.

The House of Delegates passed my legislation requiring Dominion to provide better information on coal ash pollution, disaster preparedness, and recycling. I am not happy that a permitting moratorium was removed, it is better than no bill at all and the Governor will also have a chance to amend the legislation.

The House is also poised to pass my legislation that would require the police to provide police records to next of kin in deaths involving suicide or unattended deaths. Some police departments refuse to provide this information. I think



it will help families achieve closure and assure high quality policing.

Two of my more significant bills have been referred for further study. As a part-time legislature, we frequently refer meritorious, but complex proposals to groups who meet outside of session that have better staff support, can take a deeper dive into policy choices, and provide a longer period for stakeholder vetting.

My legislation that would require school systems to purchase personal computing devices for all students expected to use electronic textbooks was sent to the Future of Public Elementary and Secondary Education Joint Committee. I am hopeful we will finally come up with some guidelines to make a personal digital device an essential learning tool in the Commonwealth.

Also, my legislation requiring regulation of predatory internet lenders was sent to the Virginia's Bureau of Financial Institutions who was directed to create a working group to propose a regulatory framework in 2018. Today, internet lenders are making loans in Virginia at rates north of 500 percent. For example, this week I

went to www.cashnetusa.com and they are offering loans for \$100, \$300, or \$1,800 at a daily rate of 0.8192 percent or in other words — an APR of 299 percent before you include the 15 percent "transaction fee" on your initial loan. This means if you borrow \$100 and make no payments you would owe \$458.86 after one year before late fees. Others have seen rates as high as 5,000 percent. We need to get this under control.

This week, I also hope to be part of negotiating the final terms of my legislation placing controls on the City of Alexandria's raw sewage discharges.

The House passed similar legislation that takes a different approach. Also, about 10 more of my

bills are set to pass the House of Delegates this week.

We will begin the process of packing up our office in preparation of moving to temporary office space for the next four years. The current General Assembly Building is an agglomeration of four asbestos-laden, leaky, and unreliable buildings with uncoordinated elevators and lousy accessibility. We will move down the hill for four years as "the GAB" is demolished and reconstructed through 2022. Finally, I have received nearly 400 responses to my Constituent Survey. Please make sure you provide your opinions soon at www.scottsurovell.org/survey.

It is an honor to serve as your state senator.

Write

The Connection welcomes views on any public issue. The deadline for all material is noon Friday. Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers. Letters are routinely edited for libel, grammar, good taste and factual errors. Send to:

Letters to the Editor
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PHOTO BY DIXIE D. VEREEN

Film and Video Studies students shoot "JAVA" on location at Northside Social in Arlington.

On Location at Northside Social


The Northside Social in Arlington was recently a movie set for "JAVA," the first short film produced in the Mason Film Lab, a new initiative by the Film and Video Studies program at George Mason University. "JAVA," will make its film festival debut in competition at the Richmond International Film Festival on Saturday, March 4, at 12 p.m. at Bow Tie Movieland 2, headlining the International Shorts Spotlight 2 program.

More than 60 of Mason's Film and Video Studies students produced and crewed the

film, which was shot at Northside Social in March 2016.


In the story, Drae Campbell ("You Move Me") co-stars as Jet, a handsome artist who realizes the dark consequences of her daily routine of obsessively sketching Diana, played by George Mason School of Theater alum Rebecca Wahls ("Admins"). Wahls is a Virginia native who currently resides in the Fairfax area.

After the debut in Richmond, "JAVA" will continue on the independent festival circuit with local screenings in the near future.



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PET CONNECTION



Pugsley & Lola

Introducing Pugsley and Lola Tobin: Pugsley (left) is 13 years old and Lola (right) is 11 years old. They are best friends who love cuddling, watching TV, eating anything and relaxing on the deck during the fall. Pugsley (right) is pictured in her wheelchair because she has a back disease that causes her back legs to become paralyzed — although, this doesn't stop her! These two are the best additions to our family.

— THE TOBINS, SPRINGFIELD



PHOTO BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION

Overseeing Editorial Work

Connection Newspapers community reporter Tim Peterson doesn't always work at a desk, but when he does, one roommate's calico Sassy Chupacabra often likes to oversee editorial operations.



Cherry Juice

Here are two photos of our daughter Sydney Bryant and her cat Cherry Juice – one when she was 3 years old and Cherry Juice was a newly adopted kitten from a barnyard litter and a recent photo of a high school grad and her loving pet. Sydney picked Cherry Juice from the many kittens in the litter and also picked his unique name. Cherry Juice passed away on Feb. 1, 2017 after 15 years of loving companionship with Sydney. They grew up together. Our family is saddened at the loss of Cherry Juice — especially his devoted owner Sydney. Rest in Peace Cherry Juice.

— DOUG BRYANT, CLIFTON



Mojo

Mojo, of Fairfax Station, playing with with a Hatchable at Christmas time.



Mojo enjoying the Sunset on Smith Mountain Lake.

PET CONNECTION



Lap Dog

Eddie, 8, with Mabel, 2. When trying to get a picture, Mabel finally sat down on Eddie's lap. This is our 125 lb. lap dog, Mabel!

— JENNIFER ZAPTIN, FAIRFAX STATION

Riley

This is our sweet poodle Riley with our daughter, ENS Julia Van Beek just before her first deployment in October 2016. Riley was adopted as a puppy and has been with us for 14 1/2 years. My daughter has been on deployment since Oct. 14 on the USS Makin Island (LHD-8) (based out of San Diego) and she is missed by all, especially Riley, and cannot wait to have her back home safely.

— GAY VAN BEEK,
FAIRFAX STATION



Cocoa Latte

Mike Salmon of Lorton with Cocoa Latte overlooking the Potomac River.

Max & Priss

Max (5) and Priss (not yet 2) are certified therapy dogs with Therapy Dogs International. I have shown Max in obedience and will be showing Priss. With the partnership of Kaiser Permanente Medical Group of Mid-Atlantic, I started a dog therapy pilot program in 2015. We visit about 20 medical centers including infusion/chemotherapy and behavioral health departments. The dogs bring humor and warmth to both members and staff. They are wonderful additions to our complete health care program.

— SHERRI LOCKE,

4 PAWS THERAPY BY KAISER PERMANENTE

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ENTERTAINMENT

Send notes to the Connection at connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/ or call 703-778-9416. The deadline is the Friday prior to the next paper's publication at noon. Dated announcements should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event.

ONGOING

FPA Television Series. Through Feb. 28, various times on Verizon FiOS TV and Cox Communications in Fairfax County, and by Comcast in Reston. The specials will air on FPA CHANNEL 10, FPA INTERNATIONAL CABLE 30, and FPA SPIRITUAL TV 36. Fairfax Public Access (FPA), will premiere a special series of new movies and documentaries throughout February, in recognition of Black History Month.

Senior Line Dancing 1-2 p.m. Little River Glen Senior Center 4001 Barker Court, Fairfax. Line Dancing is a gentle, social form of aerobic activity. Studies have shown it aids in warding off Alzheimer's disease. No previous experience needed. Cost: \$5 per 8 week session. barbriba@hotmail.com 703-524-3739

Fairfax Pets on Wheels New Volunteer Orientation First Wednesday of each month. 7:30-9 p.m. 3001 Vaden Drive, Fairfax. An orientation for new volunteers interested in visiting residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities with their approved pets through the Fairfax Pets On Wheels program is held the first Wednesday of every month starting at 7:30 p.m. Visit www.fpow.org for each month's location. Prior to attending, please complete the online application found at www.fpow.org/volunteer. Please do NOT bring pets to this orientation. Also, see weather policy for possible cancellations. www.fpow.org, 703-324-5424 or dfspetsonwheels@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Carolina Shag. Wednesdays. 6:30-10 p.m. Arlington/Fairfax Elks Lodge, 8421 Arlington Blvd., Fairfax. Free lessons at 7:30 p.m. No partners needed. Dinner menu. \$8. Under 21 free. nvshag.org.

FUN-Exercise Thursdays, noon-12:50 p.m. Grace Presbyterian Church Family Room, 7434 Bath St., Springfield. Inova certified exercise instructor leads a moderate level exercise class with music and current events conversation. Muscle, Balance, Strength Training using stretch bands and weights both standing and seated exercises. Instructor donation is \$5. moorefitt@yahoo.com or 703-499-6133.

"Out of the Blue..." Art Show **Workhouse Arts Center.** Through March 8, at 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Building 9 Hours: Wednesday - Sunday 11 - 6 p.m. Part of the Workhouse Arts Center 2nd Saturday Artwalk. "Out of the Blue..." is the featured artist show of Karen Chin. Her collection of pieces are "Out of the Blue" unrelated topics and represent a collection of subject matter that has been accumulating on her art-to-do list. The show includes a nod to the hearts, reds and pinks of February.

EXERCISE PROGRAM Mondays and Fridays at 9:30 a.m. year-round at Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5114 Twinbrook Rd. Fairfax. The exercises are for strength, balance and maintaining limberness. Contact SCFB office at 703-426-2824 for more information.

Cafe Ivrit (Hebrew Cafe). Wednesdays. 8:15-9:15 a.m. Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. Shalom (hello) Did you always want to converse in Hebrew? Join Na'ama each week for conversational Hebrew. You will learn and practice Hebrew in a fun and interactive way while learning



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

On Friday, March 3, Caroline Weinroth, aka "Miss Mountain Laurel" from the Miss America contest, will be in-concert at the Epicure Cafe, 11104 Lee Highway, Fairfax, at 8 p.m. to benefit Children's Miracle Network Hospitals with her GMU-based band. Visit carolineweinroth.com/missamerica for more.

more about Israel. Free, however we ask that you try to attend regularly. RSVP.Naama.Gold@jccnv.org.

Smoke Free Bingo. 7 p.m. Every Friday. Fairfax Volunteer Fire Department, 4081 University Drive, Fairfax. Free coffee, entertaining callers, \$1,000 jackpot (with breaks for smoking friends). www.fairfaxvd.com. 703-273-3638.

English Conversation Groups weekly at George Mason, Burke Centre, and Lorton Libraries Practice and improve your English. Day and start times vary. Visit: <https://va.evanced.info/fairfaxcounty/lib/eventcalendar.asp>

Stories From Strawberry Park 10-11 a.m. Tuesdays in Mosaic, Strawberry Park, 2910 District Ave., Fairfax. Enjoy a live interactive performance each week. For ages 10 and under. Held outside in Strawberry Park. In inclement weather and October through April, storytime will be held in Angelika Film Center. Visit www.fxva.com/listing/mosaic-district/2326/.

Funday Monday 10:30 a.m., every Monday at Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. There will be music, movement, storytelling, performances, crafts, and more. It is open to children of all ages, however especially for those who haven't yet started school. Programs are free and open to the public, donations are gratefully appreciated. There is ample free parking in the downtown area, and stroller access at the rear of Old Town Hall on Main St. 703-385-7858 www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts

THURSDAY/FEB. 23

Volunteer Awards. 2 p.m. at Greenspring Village, 7470 Spring Village Drive. Service Awards to residents and non-residents who volunteer both at Greenspring and with Greenspring-related service activities in the greater community. Call 703- 451-4256 for more.

FRIDAY/FEB. 24

Angry Birds Event and Movie. 6-8:45 p.m. at Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Old Lee Highway. Games, snacks and movie. \$15. Call

703-385-7858.

Cello and Piano Concert. 8 p.m. at Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive. The Bonita Lestina Old Town Hall Performance Series with cathedral Brass is under the direction of L. Thomas Vining. Call 703-385-7858 or visit www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts.

SATURDAY/FEB. 25

Black History Month Commemoration. 9 a.m. at the Kings Park Community Library, 9000 Burke Lake Road. Call 703-978-5600 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov.

Brothers at Arms in the American Revolution. 11 a.m. at City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North St. Book talk by local author, Larrie D. Ferreiro. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library or call 703-293-6227 x6.

Art and Lunch. Noon-3 p.m. at Village Gallery, 3950 University Drive. Bring lunch and enjoy the company of other artists. Free and open to the public. New members welcome. Please visit the Fairfax Art League on Facebook or at www.fairfaxartleague.net or call 703-587-9481.

Civil War Interpretive. 2-4 p.m. at Historic Blenheim, 3610 Old Lee Highway. Retired educator Wes Boutchard will unfold the incredible story of a mulatto slave related to Blenheim's Willcox family, his escape from slavery and the choices he made as a free man. Call 703-591-6728 for more.

SUNDAY/FEB. 26

American Youth Philharmonic Orchestras. 3-5 p.m. at Fairfax High School, 3501 Rebel Run. Sibelius, Finlandia and Liszt, Les Preludes concert. Visit www.aypo.org for more information.

Burke Historical Society. 3:30-5 p.m. at Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road. Brian Slawski, BHS Vice President and Programs Chair, will conclude his series on jazz in Northern Virginia and the District, past and present, with a look at local jazz festivals, instruction, and radio. Free. Visit www.burkehistoricalsociety.org for

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 10

more.

Into the Joy of Spring. 4 p.m. at Lanier Middle School, 3801 Germantown Road. Fairfax Band concert. Free. Visit fairfaxband.org or a call 571-336-CFBA (2322).

MONDAY/FEB. 27

Funday Monday. 10:30 a.m. at Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive. Music, movement, storytelling, performances, crafts, and more. Call 703-385-7858 or visit www.fairfaxva.gov/culturalarts for more.

Discovering Fossils. 10:30-11:30 a.m. at Fair Oaks Mall, 11750 Fair Oaks Mall. Learn to recognize differences between trace and body fossils, learn about where fossils are found and excavated, handle real fossils. For children in grades 3-5. \$25 per child/adult pair. Call 703-648-3130, email info@childsci.org or visit childsci.org for more.

THURSDAY/MARCH 2

Hooligan Sparrow Film. 4:30 p.m. at Johnson Center Cinema, George Mason University, 4400 University Drive. The film follows activist Ye Haiyan to China's Hainan Province to protest a principal's abuse of elementary school girls. Visit fams.gmu.edu/events/6438.

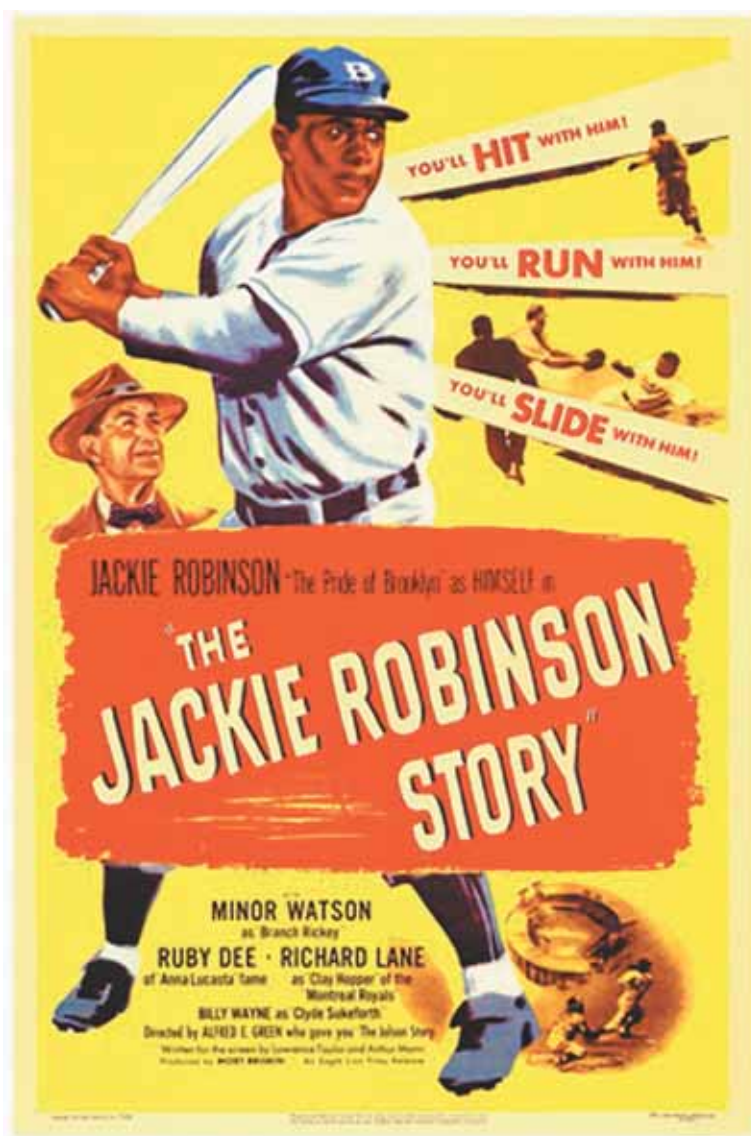
FRIDAY/MARCH 3

Children's Benefit Concert. 8 p.m. at the Epicure Cafe, 11104 Lee Highway, Fairfax. Caroline Weinroth, Fairfax community member and local Miss America titleholder, Miss Mountain Laurel, will be hosting a benefit concert for Children's Miracle Network Hospitals with her GMU-based band. Visit carolineweinroth.com/missamerica for more.

SATURDAY/MARCH 4

Film Screening. 2 p.m. at the Unity of Fairfax, 2854 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. The screening of the film "Matt Shepard is a Friend of Mine," a documentary exploring the life and death of Matthew Shepard, a gay student murdered in 1998, in Laramie, WY. The story of Matt Shepard's struggles is told through the personal lens of his friends, family and those who were close to him throughout the years. Visit mattshepard.eventbrite.com.

Single Dinner and Movie Night. 5 p.m. at Uncle Julio's, 4251 Fairfax Corner Ave. \$32 at door includes dinner, soda, tip and movie ticket. RSVP required. Sponsored by New Beginnings, a support group for separated/divorced men and women. Call 301-924-4101 or visit



Through Feb. 28 Fairfax Public Access (FPA), will premiere a special series of new movies and documentaries throughout February, in recognition of Black History Month. The specials will run at various times on Verizon FiOS TV and Cox Communications in Fairfax County, and by Comcast in Reston. The specials will air on FPA CHANNEL 10, FPA INTERNATIONAL CABLE 30, and FPA SPIRITUAL TV 36.

www.newbeginningsusa.org.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 8

Irish Luncheon. 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at Springfield Golf and Country Club, 8301 Old Keene Mill Road. Springfield Christian Women's Connection will host, with musical entertainment from bagpiper Robert Mitchell. \$20. For luncheon reservations call 703-922 6438 or e-mail SpringWmConn@yahoo.com by March 3.

MARCH 8-APRIL 2

"Her Story" Art Exhibition. Gallery hours are Mon.-Fri: 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sun: 12-5 p.m. at the Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Show focuses on how women have a role in inspiring and shaping our society. The artists will be on hand to talk about their work and the processes they use at the opening reception 6-9 p.m. on March 11. Visit www.workhousearts.org/ for more.

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Hugo's Opioid Prescription Limit Bill Passes

Deaths from prescription opioids have more than quadrupled since 1999.

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

Rob Anderson was prescribed 30 days-worth of hydrocodone for pain, after he had four wisdom teeth removed in 10th grade. “I took one of them and I didn’t like it, it gave me a sick feeling,” Anderson said. “And I had another 29 days worth of these painkillers that I could’ve done anything with.”

Anderson said he just threw them away. He could have sold them, given them away, but he didn’t.

He didn’t question the prescription when at the oral surgeon’s; his parents took care of picking it up, though they thought the regimen was “crazy too.”

Many like Anderson have been hanging on to those excess addictive pain pills, and taking the full prescription for no other reason than to finish it.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, the majority of drug overdose deaths in the United States involve an opioid — a trend on the rise and arguably linked to the amount of those meds being prescribed. Deaths from prescription opioids such as oxycodone, hydrocodone and methadone have more than quadrupled since 1999, according to the CDC.

Heroin use is also trending up, and experts say 75 percent of new users reported

abusing prescription opioids before switching to heroin — a cheaper alternative.

Fairfax County and Virginia aren’t excluded from what’s being called an epidemic.

“We’re still better than some jurisdictions in Virginia,” said Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield), “The Shenandoah Valley, Roanoke area, it’s devastating down there.”

“But the situation is getting worse here,” Herrity added. The supervisor has hosted several town hall meetings to raise awareness to the issue. In a newsletter earlier this year, he reported that in the final week of 2016, there were four heroin overdose deaths in Fairfax County in a two-day period.

“We must face the fact that the opioid crisis is in our neighborhoods and schools,” Herrity wrote.

The CDC recommends improving opioid prescribing to reduce people’s exposure to the drugs and prevent and stop addiction.

Working with Herrity, Del. Tim Hugo (R-40) developed and introduced a bill to limit prescriptions of opioid pain medicine.

“It’s heartbreaking to hear some of these



Del. Tim Hugo (R-40) is joined by constituent Sam Hillenberg, who’s working as a General Assembly page during this legislative session. Hugo’s HB 1885 limiting opioids prescriptions has passed both the House of Delegates and Senate.

the Virginia House and Senate as of Feb. 15, and will go before Gov. Terry McAuliffe, limits opioid prescriptions to seven days. Otherwise the prescriber is required to request information about the patient from the Prescription Monitoring Program.

“Too often patients are intentionally visiting more than one physician and are being prescribed multiple opioids,” said Hugo said in a statement. “Directing physicians to verify a patient’s prescription history can prevent inadvertent over-prescribing and help in reducing opioid addiction.”

Though Hugo considers the bill a win, he likens the overdose epidemic to the scourge of sex trafficking that he pushed legislation to curb for

at least four years. “I assume we’re going to be doing the same thing here,” said Hugo. “We have to keep chipping away at it. This is one definitely worth fighting for.”

“We’ve got a big fight on our hands,” Hugo added, “but this is a big step in the right direction. It’s something attacking all socioeconomic groups. I really think you have to push back.”

stories,” Hugo said. “People get addicted, have family members addicted. You feel for them. Everyone’s realizing there’s a great problem out there.”

Anderson is a legislative aide for Hugo. When he told the delegate about his own experience with excessive prescribing, it only further solidified how pervasive it is.

Hugo’s bill HB 1885, which passed both

Filler-Corn’s HB 2404 Passes with Amendments

Bill would create PANDAS advisory council.

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

Overnight, Alexandria resident Carol Quick’s 9-year-old son developed an eating disorder — an obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety. “He started displaying very unusual and alarming symptoms, when he was 9,” Quick said. “Enough so that we sought help from the pediatrician, had to go to emergency room for dehydration.” At the time, Quick’s pediatrician dismissed the symptoms as simply anxiety.

Two years later, Quick’s son became significantly worse. A psychiatrist suggested he might be suffering from Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections (PANDAS).

After waiting months for an appointment with a specialist, the Quicks’ first PANDAS diagnosis was confirmed. Their son was barely able to leave the house to attend school, he was so underweight due to self-imposed restricted eating.

“For an 11-year-old to have such severe, despondent, depression, he didn’t under-

stand,” Quick said. “He knew something was wrong, but didn’t know why. He was sad, embarrassed. Just by not wanting to be at school, feeling so scared when he was there.”

In PANDAS, the body produces antibodies in reaction to the strep bacteria, some of which target the brain, which can result in inflammation, OCD tics and other neuropsychiatric symptoms.

Diagnosing PANDAS is clinical, rather than laboratory-based, and many physicians don’t have a protocol for treating it, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. The PANDAS Network information and advocacy nonprofit estimates PANDAS and the related Pediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome (PANS) affects as many as 1 in 200 children.

“They also were still very skeptical this was an actual, true, diagnosis,” Quick said of her experience with various doctors, “which is just so disheartening when you’re trying to help your child. Finally you realize what he has can be treated. And your pediatrician says I don’t really think that’s true.”

Quick said it’s very difficult to get treatment for PANDAS because there are so few specialists, and those that exist don’t take insurance.

Teresa Champion of Springfield had a similarly slow and frustrating process with her son becoming diagnosed and treated for

PANDAS.

But Champion’s son, 23, had a pre-existing condition of autism that “muddled the water” for a lot of practitioners. That was seen as the root of other issues.

Like Quick’s son, he had sudden-onset separation anxiety, panic attacks and an eating disorder.

“This is a diagnosis that waxes and wanes,” Champion said. “It isn’t just bacterial, it can be viruses, cold, flu, that triggers the immune system to respond. The difference is my son really didn’t get treatment. The diagnosis teased out from autism until much older. It was determined to be pediatric, many practitioners don’t think it carried over into adulthood, which is absurd.” Quick and Champion agree, by far the most challenging aspect of PANDAS is getting medical treatment. They’re hoping that that will change, for their sons and other living with either diagnosed or undiagnosed PANDAS or PANS, with a bill brought to the Virginia General Assembly by Del. Eileen Filler-Corn (D-41).

HB 2404 CALLS FOR creating an advisory council on PANDAS and PANS. The purpose of this body, according to the bill summary, would be to “advise the Commissioner of Health on research, diagnosis, treatment, and education relating to these identified disorders and syndrome.”

Champion hopes a group like this would

be able to raise the level of education and training for physicians in Virginia, so there can be more treatment, including antibiotics, steroids and cognitive behavioral therapy.

Filler-Corn’s bill passed the House of Delegates on Feb. 7. The senate passed it with amendments on Feb. 20. One day later, the House agreed to the amendments and adopted it by a vote of 93 to 4.

“Having the opportunity to work with Ms. Champion, Jessica Gavin and so many other Virginians who have loved ones are affected by this disease is a reminder of why I ran for office in the first place — to help make people’s lives better,” Filler-Corn said in a statement. “For many parents, it takes an average of three years and eight different doctors before their child is diagnosed with PANS. Creating this advisory council will bring much needed awareness to this debilitating disease. I am grateful for the overwhelming bipartisan support this bill has received.”

Quick said their hope is that with this legislation, more and more pediatricians will recognize it. “There are probably a lot of kids suffering from symptoms that are related to PANDAS,” she said, “and not getting treated. Because people don’t know what it is.” For more information, visit www.nimh.nih.gov/labs-at-nimh/research-areas/clinics-and-labs/pdnb/web.shtml and www.pandasnetwork.org.

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COMMUNITY

Chris Boullire welcomes fundraisers from around the area to the Wall of Hope reception, handing out awards for fundraising "champions."



PHOTO BY EDEN BROWN/THE CONNECTION

A Record Year

Alzheimer's Association of the National Capital Region honors its supporters.

BY EDEN BROWN
THE CONNECTION

Megan Newman told her story at the Alzheimer's Association "Wall of Hope" reception at Tyson's Corner on Feb. 9. She was only 18, a senior in high school, when her mother started to ask the same question more than once. They both attributed it to stress. They laughed about it. A few months later, it became clear to Meghan that what was wrong with her mother was more than stress. She convinced her to see a doctor, but it took many tests and many neurologists later before she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

It came at a difficult time for Megan, as she was headed off to college. She was supposed to be at the "best years of your life" stage. She laughs about it now, but switching roles with her parent at that point in her life was anything but funny. When she went to college, her mother went with her. When she moved off campus, she moved with her mother. The long days of caregiving, studying and managing the lives of two people took a toll on Megan. Her mother didn't really appreciate being told she had to brush her teeth or that she wasn't going to be able to drive her car any longer. Alzheimer's patients don't always exhibit a good-natured response to having children tell them what to do. Megan wasn't always patient and forbearing. And that bothered her. When it became time for her to hold down a job, Megan couldn't manage both

tasks anymore. That is why she was so grateful to find the Alzheimer's Association, and why she will always give back to this organization: they helped her manage her mother and supported her, she said. The reception on Feb. 9 recognized event participants and supporters who distinguished themselves through leadership and exemplary fundraising during the year. Supporters were able to see the unveiling of new plaques on the Wall of Hope, which honors those who suffered from the disease and their friends and family who gave in their name. Attendees at the event made up 2 percent of the fundraisers and sponsors who raised over 45 percent of total funds from events. In 2016, 7,700 participants raised a record \$1.78 million. And they had a good time doing it. Chris Boullire, the CEO of the National Capital Area Alzheimer's Association chapter, honored the 29 cyclists who created the "Ride to Remember," riding 100 miles and raising more than \$20,000; the 260 Longest Day participants who raised over \$118,000 participating in creative activities; the "Blondes v. Brunettes" (a flag football game for women,) which had 80 participants and raised over \$85,173; and the biggest event for 2016 in this area: the Walk to End Alzheimer's had 7,300 participants at seven walks throughout the region who raised \$1.53 million.

The Alzheimer's Association in the area is always looking for additional Walk volunteers and teams for 2017. Interested people can visit www.alznca.org/walk.

Megan Newman told the story of being a senior in high school when her mother was diagnosed.



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NEWS



PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEE POPE

Del. Peter Farrell (R-56) wanted lawmakers to force internet lenders to follow the same rules as other kinds of lenders in Virginia. Members of the Republican-led Commerce and Labor Committee rejected his bill but created a work group to look at that issue and other concerns about predatory lending in Virginia.

Lawmaker Work Group to Examine Predatory Lending

Panel to investigate internet loans, car-title loans and open-end lines of credit.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

The growing chorus of criticism about predatory lending in Virginia may not have prompted lawmakers to start passing laws to crack down on the industry. But it has accomplished one thing, formation of a work group.

"In this town, if you are in the minority party in a chamber that's two-thirds Republican, you take victories where you can," said Del. Mark Keam (D-35). "I'd like to think something good can come out of this if we can bring stakeholders together."

Lawmakers are concerned about several aspects of high-interest loans. One is the bait-and-switch nature of many of the businesses, where customers walk into a car-title business but walk out with an open-end line of credit instead. Another issue is the completely unregulated nature of open-end lines of credit, originally created for department stores but now used by car-title lenders and internet lenders. Regulators don't track them, and lenders don't need a license to offer them. Recent years have seen online lenders from around the world offer them with interest rates of up to 5,000 percent.

"If the work group doesn't deal with the open-end loans, it'll be a waste of time," said Jay Speer, executive director of the Virginia Poverty Law Center. "You can make rules about the Consumer Finance Act, and then all the internet lenders will just switch to open-end loans and it'll all just be a waste of time."

WORKING GROUPS are a common way for lawmakers to punt, essentially putting off making decisions and outsourcing solutions to a panel that makes recommendations. Sometimes the groups end up making recommendations that are adopted by the General Assembly. Recent years have seen successful working groups that made significant changes to energy policy and worker's compensation. Many lawmakers view them as an ideal way to consider difficult issues outside of the frenzied pace of the General Assembly sessions.

"There are what I believe to be plus sides to being a part-time legislature, and there are downsides to being a part-time legislature. One of the downsides is you can't keep working during one session in a short session," said Del. Peter Farrell (R-56). "Sometimes it takes a year."

For critics of predatory lending, the chief goal of the working group will be to regulate open-end lines of credit. These have become the tool of choice for car-title lenders and internet lenders to offer unlimited amounts of interest. And lawmakers don't know the scale of the problem because state regulators don't track them. That's a problem that critics say has an easy fix — require a license to offer open-end lines of credit, and make them abide by the same rules as car-title lenders or payday lenders.

"I hope that we see a path forward for all lenders to be licensed," said Dana Wiggins, who answers the Predatory Lending Hotline at the Virginia Poverty Law Center. "If they're operating in the state of Virginia, they should all be licensed and they should all have to follow the same rules."

THE SHADOWY WORLD of internet lending is also in the crosshairs of the work group. Some companies offer loans at interest rates from 600 percent to 5,000 percent. Some of these companies try to get around laws designed to protect consumers by claiming to have affiliations with Indian tribes, allowing them to take advantage of uncertainty surrounding a law from 1918 — long before the World Wide Web revolutionized modern American finance. Last month, Attorney General Mark Herring helped secure a \$15 million settlement against a California-based company that was using a fraudulent relationship to a North Dakota tribe to evade Virginia lending laws.

"In the absence of action, the internet becomes a lawless place that plays by different rules than traditional commerce," said Kevin Mauer, associate director of the Virginia Catholic Conference. "Without protective regulation, the commonwealth's vulnerable consumers may fall prey to more and more opportunistic lenders."