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HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT

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Fairfax CONNECTION

'The Dance Numbers Are Spectacular'

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Festival of Lights and Carols, this Saturday

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From left, Ashleigh Wood, Kendra Walsh, Rithika Ashok, Tiffanie Jones and Myra Lawson strike a pose. Encore's Christmas show starts Dec. 7.

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Children and adults brave the heat of the fire pit to toast marshmallows for s'mores during last year's festival.



Girl Scouts from Service Unit 55-6 sing carols during the 2017 Festival of Lights and Carols.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/
THE CONNECTION

Festival of Lights and Carols, this Saturday

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

The City of Fairfax officially kicks off the holiday season this weekend with a flurry of fun-filled activities for the whole family. It all begins with the second annual City of Fairfax Holiday Market in Old Town Square, 10415 North St. in downtown Fairfax.

❖ Holiday Market

Friday, Nov. 30, from 5-8 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 1, from noon-6 p.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 2, from noon-4 p.m.

An array of craft vendors will offer their wares under the venue's twinkling, holiday

lights. The Holiday Market will run the first, three weekends of December on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, with different vendors each weekend.

❖ Pancake Breakfast

This Saturday, Dec. 1, is the annual Pancake Breakfast with Santa. It's on the third floor of Fire Station 3, at 4081 University Drive, from 8-11 a.m.

❖ Festival of Lights and Carols

This holiday event will be held Dec. 1, from noon-6 p.m., in Old Town Square and Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive. Enjoy live music, hot cider and s'mores, and also tour the historic Ratcliffe-Allison-Pozer

House at 10386 Main St. Then, at 5:30 p.m., enjoy caroling and the lighting of the City's Christmas tree. For more information, call 703-385-7858.

❖ Christmas in Camp

On Sunday, Dec. 2, from noon-4 p.m., visit Historic Blenheim at 3610 Old Lee Hwy. to participate in the holiday customs of Civil War soldiers and civilians at home. For further information, call 703-591-0560.

❖ Holiday Market

Friday, Dec. 7, from 5-8 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 8, from noon-6 p.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 9, from noon-4 p.m., in Old Town Square.

❖ Lunch with Santa

Children 10 and younger may have Lunch with Santa Claus on Saturday, Dec. 8, at 11 a.m., noon and 1 p.m., in Old Town Hall. Tickets are \$6 each and are available online (<https://www.fairfaxva.gov/>) and at the Parks and Recreation Department offices in City Hall, 10455 Armstrong St.; the Sherwood Center, 3740 Old Lee Hwy.; and Green Acres Center, 4401 Sideburn Road. For information, call 703-385-7858.

❖ Holiday Market

Friday, Dec. 14, from 5-8 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 15, from noon-6 p.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 16, from noon-4 p.m., in Old Town Square.

'A New Tradition for Fairfax City'

Time for the first Holiday Window Decorating Contest.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

If people can be dressed in their finest, holiday attire to celebrate the season, then so can windows. So participating Fairfax City businesses will be adorning their storefront windows for the City's first Holiday Window Decorating Contest.

Sponsored by the Office of Economic Development, the purpose of the competition is to not only bring awareness to the local businesses, but to connect visitors and residents to them. "It's citywide," said Danette Nguyen, Office of Economic Development business development associate. "We want to call attention to the entire City of Fairfax and bring a little of Fifth Avenue New York's holiday spirit to Fairfax City."

Business owners who would like to be part of the fun should sign up by Nov. 30 at fairfaxcityconnected.com/hwdc. Decorations will be up for all to enjoy from Dec. 2-Jan. 6. Judging will begin on Dec. 3.

The theme is "Classic Holiday Stories," so participants will transform their

ground-level, storefront windows to illustrate seasonal favorites such as "How the Grinch Stole Christmas," "Elf," "Polar Express," "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "Frosty the Snowman."

"The great thing about this contest is that two awards will be given," said Nguyen. "There'll be both a Grand Prize and a People's Choice award."

The Grand Prize award will be decided by the mayor, City Council and OED. Winners will be judged on craftsmanship, originality, creativity and effective use of color and material.

To determine the People's Choice award winner, said Nguyen, "We'll post photos of the participating businesses' window decorations on the Economic Development Authority's Facebook page, [Facebook.com/fairfaxcityeda](https://www.facebook.com/fairfaxcityeda). Then, from Dec. 3 through Dec. 7, Fairfax City residents and visitors can vote for their favorite, holiday window displays by liking their photos on that page."

Winners will be announced via the EDA's Facebook page and blog at fairfaxcityconnected.com/hwdc winners on Friday, Dec. 14. Award winners will be presented with a trophy to keep in their place

of business until next year's competition.

Displays must be family-friendly and have no blinking lights, since they could distract passing motorists. They must be visible from the sidewalk, but should not block the pedestrian right of way or the sidewalk, itself.

Businesses that have already signed up to participate include:

Chubby Squirrel Brewing Co., 10382 Willard Way; Flooring America, 9979 Main St.; Room Escape Fairfax, 3949 University Drive; Paint Your Own Pottery, 10417 Main St.; YogaWorks Fairfax, 3950 University Drive; Smash'd Creamery, 10427 North St., No. 103; Commonwealth Dry Goods, 10409 Main St., Unit C; and Mara Hair and Mode Studio, 4011 Chain Bridge Road.

"This is my favorite time of year and a new tradition for Fairfax City," said Nguyen. "It's a great way to get into the holiday spirit and to see all the businesses in the City decorated for the season."

For more information about the contest, including which businesses are participating, go to fairfaxcityconnected.com/hwdc.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

HOLIDAY DONATIONS

Blanket and Coat Drive. Through Dec. 8.

Organized by NOVA Relief Center, blankets and coats will be sent to refugees in three camps in Jordan this winter. Blankets and coats should be new or gently worn. Monetary donations are also needed and may be made to NOVA Relief Center online and at some drop-off locations. For drop-off sites or to make a tax-deductible donation, visit novareliefceneter.org.

Holiday Basket Donation. Christmas baskets by

Dec. 17. Preparing a special holiday meal and joining one's family around the table to give thanks are visions that come to mind when we think of Christmas dinner. For many families and individuals, enjoying a special holiday meal when finances are tight is just not possible. Visit www.koinoniacares.org/holiday-baskets.html for suggestions and to sign up to donate a basket.

Food for Fines. Nov. 1-30. Fairfax County Public

Library will be hosting a food drive called "Food for Fines." Canned goods and other non-perishable items collected during the drive will be donated to Food for Others, a not-for-profit food pantry and food rescue operation that serves Fairfax County. Each item donated will erase \$1 from a patron's overdue fines up to a maximum of \$15. Customers may donate even if there are no fines accrued. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/food-fines for more.

Toys for Tots Donations. Nov. 28-Dec. 8 at

PaperMoon, 6315 Amherst Ave., Springfield. PaperMoon, a gentlemen's club in Springfield, will give back to the community by collecting new, unwrapped toys for Toys for Tots. Call 703-866-4160 or visit www.papermoonvip.com for more.

Toys for Tots Drive. Through Dec. 10. Area

Sheehy Auto Stores will collect new and

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 15

Burke Has a Heart of Gold Somewhere

Local gold prospecting pays off in tiny amounts.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

In 1799, a 17-pound nugget of gold was found near Charlotte, N.C., starting the lesser known East Coast Gold Rush, that spread into Virginia. As the years passed, and gold coins were produced in Charlotte, the east coast gold belt that stretched from the Harpers Ferry area to the Piedmont died down and talk of gold went to California.

This was a topic of discussion of Mike Johnson's recent lecture titled "Prehistory of Gold (Au) in Northern Virginia," Burke Historical Society sponsored at the Pohick Library. Johnson, a former Fairfax County archeologist, offered geological and archeological data and displayed a vial of gold dust that he found in Northern Virginia over the past year. "This is all year, at least once a week," Johnson said, holding up the glass vial. "That took a lot of work," he added.

On the title page, there was an arrowhead he found, with a penny and a little pile of gold dust, just to show a size comparison, and show how panning for gold in Northern Virginia should only be a hobby. There was a nugget found more recently that

weighs two ounces, but it's another rarity and is more valuable to show off than it is to melt down and sell. "That piece is priceless," said Scott Sprague, a member of the east coast chapter of a prospecting with roots in California. "It's not about money."

Johnson's presentation started with the geologic process to make gold, and evolved into a period 18,000 years ago when the Chesapeake Bay was created, the Bering Land Bridge, the Clovis points and Paleo America. "Five thousand years ago, at least in this area, there were foragers," Johnson said. A cave drawing of sorts called the Silsby's Rock pictograph was found at Great Falls in recent years and is now on display in the Great Falls Visitors Center.

The attendees wanted to know about gold around here though, and when talking gold, the hot spots are a big secret – similar to fishing. Around here, most of the land is owned by the government or private individuals so hunting for gold or panning or gold is not allowed.

"There aren't many places, you're going to have to get permission," Johnson said. "One of the rules is, you don't reveal your source," he added.

Someone in the audience brought up the Burke Gold Mine, which Johnson wasn't familiar with but another person did know that it was about 200 yards from Pohick Creek. There were a few whispers, but the topic quickly changed. Fountainhead Park is in the gold belt, Johnson said, and noted that this was determined from a micro speck of gold he found there.



PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

Former county archeologist Mike Johnson with a vial of dust that took him a long time to find.

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PEOPLE

Historic Pohick Church Minister Receives Award

Rev. Dr. Thomas A. Costa of the Historic Pohick Church Docent Guild received the Bronze Good Citizenship Medal from President Ernie Coggins of the George Washington Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution at the conclusion of a program that honored seven veterans living at the Sunrise at Mount Vernon assisted-living facility in Alexandria on Nov. 10. After honoring the esteemed veterans of our armed forces for Veterans Day, the Bronze Good Citizenship medal was awarded by the chapter for Reverend Costa's service to the residents, to the local SAR, and for supporting Revolutionary War-era history programs in the area.



Burke Student Earns American Heritage Girls Award

Theresa M. Morthland of Burke earned the Stars & Stripes Award, the highest recognition that American Heritage Girls offers to girl members. The award requires a great deal of time, sacrifice and devotion to achieve.

In addition to living out the American Heritage Girls creed and oath, award recipients complete a number of requirements, including earning a total of 16 merit badges; holding a leadership position in their troop for a minimum of six months; planning, developing and providing leadership to others in a service project lasting more than 100 hours; writing a life ambition/spiritual walk essay and résumé; and passing a Board of Review.

Morthland chose to serve the Church of the Nativity Catholic School by designing and building an elevated sandbox with an innovative design so preschool children in wheelchairs and children with tactile difficulties can play in the sand with their friends. The sandbox has become a focal point in the playground and with multiple classes of children. She worked with multiple schools before actual construction, making presentations to each administration to seek approval. She also made a presentation to the parish's Knights of Columbus Council 7992 seeking and ultimately receiving their financial support to complete the project.

Morthland served as the troop's Senior Troop Leader, Closet Coordinator, and earned multiple awards, such as, the Harriet Tubman Level Award, Dolley Madison Level Award, and the Mary, the First Disciple Religious Medal.

A member of Immanuel Bible Church's American Heritage Girls Troop VA1115,



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Theresa M. Morthland of Burke.

Morthland is the 448th girl nationally — and the 37th girl in Virginia — to earn the Stars & Stripes Award. She will be recognized in a court-of-honor ceremony at 7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 17, at Immanuel Bible Church in Annandale.

She is the daughter of Sam and Michele Morthland of Burke and the family attends the Church of the Nativity Catholic Church in Burke. She graduated Lake Braddock Secondary School in June where she was active in the Color Guard. She currently attends West Virginia University as a Freshman in Forensics Biology. She was recognized by the college with both academic and leadership scholarships.

American Heritage Girls Inc. is a national character-development organization for girls ages 5 to 18 that embraces Christian values and encourages family involvement. For more information, go to www.americanheritagegirls.org.



Notice of Public Hearing

NOTICE OF BUDGET AND WATER RATE PUBLIC HEARING

December 13, 2018 at 6:30 p.m.

At 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 13, 2018, Fairfax Water will conduct a public hearing on its Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges. The hearing will be held in Fairfax Water's offices at 8570 Executive Park Avenue, Fairfax, VA.

The proposed changes, to be effective April 1, 2019, include the following:

1. An increase in the Availability Charge from \$4,150 to \$4,260¹.
2. An increase in the Local Facilities Charge from \$13,420 to \$15,285.
3. An increase in the Service Connection Charge from \$1,260 to \$1,300¹.
4. An increase in the Base Commodity Charge from \$2.94 to \$3.07 per 1,000 gallons of water.
5. An increase in the Quarterly Billing Service Charge for meters larger than a standard 5/8" residential meter¹.
6. An increase in the Turn Off / Turn On Charge from \$45 to \$48.
7. An increase in the Fees for Use of Fairfax Water Fire Hydrants to include the increase in the Commodity Charge.
8. An increase in the Installation of Sewer Use Meter Charge from \$36 to \$38.

¹Charges reflect fees associated with a standard 5/8" residential meter. Changes in charges for larger residential and commercial meters are reflected in the Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges.

Fairfax Water is also proposing a \$183.2 million budget for calendar year 2019¹. Revenues are expected to be \$183.2 million in 2019. Water sales are expected to provide \$158.3 million. Approximately \$24.9 million is expected from connection charges, investment income and other sources.

The major areas of operation and maintenance expense are:

Category	-\$1,000s-	
	2018	2019
Personal Services and Employee Benefits	\$ 55,934	\$ 57,584
Power and Utilities	10,755	11,102
Chemicals	6,958	7,532
Purchased Water	7,810	7,155
Supplies and Materials	5,261	5,444
Insurance	955	1,075
Fuel	700	728
Postage	603	612
Contractual Services	12,481	12,974
Professional Services	1,001	1,065
Other	2,428	2,505
Sub-Total	104,886	107,776
Transfer to Improvement Fund	(10,248)	(10,380)
Total	\$ 94,638	\$ 97,396

Net revenues are expected to be appropriated as follows:

Debt Payment	\$42,988,000
Improvement Fund	\$11,000,000
General Fund	\$31,337,000

¹ Fairfax Water's Board will continue to monitor economic factors and review revenues and expenditures at mid-year to determine if additional action is needed.

A copy of the proposed changes to the rates can be viewed on our website at www.fairfaxwater.org/rates. A copy of the proposed budget can be found at www.fairfaxwater.org. Those wishing to speak or receive a copy of the proposed changes should call Ms. Eva Catlin at 703-289-6017.

Interested parties may submit written comments to PublicHearingComments@fairfaxwater.org or mail written comments to:

Fairfax Water
Public Hearing Comments
8570 Executive Park Avenue
Fairfax, VA 22031

All written comments must be received by close of business on Wednesday, December 12, 2018, to be included in the record of the public hearing.

OPINION

Call for Children's Connection 2018

Get creative and send art, poetry and more.

During the last week of each year, this newspaper devotes its pages to the creativity of local students and children. The annual Children's Connection (including Children's Gazette, Children's Almanac and Children's Centre View) is a tradition of well over a decade.

We welcome contributions from public and private schools, art classes, individuals and homeschoolers. We publish artwork, poetry, essays, creative writing, opinion pieces, short stories, photography, photos of sculpture or gardens or other creative efforts.

We ask that all submissions be digital so they can be sent through email or delivered on flash drive. Writing should be submitted in text format. Artwork should be photographed or scanned and provided in jpeg format.

Some suggestions:

❖ Drawings or paintings or photographs of

your family, friends, pets or some favorite activity. These should be photographed or scanned and submitted in jpeg format. Photos of sculpture or larger art projects are also welcome.

❖ Short answers (50 to 100 words) to some of the following questions: If you could give your parents, family or friends any gift that didn't cost money what would that gift be? What are you most looking forward to in the upcoming year? What do you want to be when you grow up? What is your favorite animal? What is your favorite toy? What makes a good friend?

❖ Your opinion (50 to 100 words) about traffic, sports, restaurants, video games, toys, trends, politics, etc.

❖ Poetry or other creative writing.

❖ News stories from school newspapers.

❖ Photos and text about activities or events.

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

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

location. Home schoolers' contributions are welcomed.

To send flash drives containing artwork and typed, electronic submissions, mark them clearly by school and hometown and mail the flash drive to: Children's Connection (including Children's Gazette, Children's Almanac and Children's Centre View), 1606 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.

Please send all submissions by Monday, Dec. 3, 2018. The Children's Edition will publish the last week of 2018.

You can see last year's editions by visiting www.connectionnewspapers.com/PDFs/ and scroll down to Children's Edition.

Email submissions for the Children's Edition to the following editors:

For Burke, Clifton, Fairfax, Fairfax Station, Great Falls, Herndon, Lorton, McLean, Reston, or Springfield, email to Kemal Kurspahic at

kemal@connectionnewspapers.com.

For Arlington, Potomac, CentreView, Chantilly, Alexandria and Mount Vernon, email to Steven Mauren, smauren@connectionnewspapers.com

EDITORIAL

Bringing People in from the Cold

This year 36 churches will be host sites for the hypothermia program.

BY JOE FAY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FACETS



Fifteen years ago, two Fairfax men froze to death during the fall. At the time, FACETS was a nonprofit that was primarily serving meals to the county's homeless in partnership with several churches. FACETS' leaders knew that feeding people only to send them back into the extreme cold was not a great answer for the growing number of people who were homeless in the community.

That winter FACETS responded by offering temporary shelter in conjunction with its partner churches, the Lamb Center, and Salvation Army to get people in from the cold. The first year, these hypothermia shelters rotated to several different churches and only opened when the temperatures dropped below freezing. Soon the centers were serving up to 60 people on cold nights.

The program has evolved as the region's population has grown. In 2006, FACETS worked on policies and procedures with the county and formally began managing central Fairfax's Hypothermia Prevention and Response Program. This year 36 churches will be host sites for the program with more than 50 churches and other faith communities providing volunteers.

These faith community partners rotate when opening their doors to provide shelter. In anticipation, churches and temples are preparing their facilities to welcome people in need during the cold months ahead — cleaning, getting supplies, and preparing the space. Other volunteers are planning menus. Unique partnerships have formed as a result of the program as Christians, Muslims, Jews, and more join together to help the homeless and in the process learn about each other.

The effort also matured beyond just providing safe haven. Guests now receive life-changing

case management. By interacting with guests at the shelters, FACETS' case managers are able to address their needs in a very personal way by gaining their trust and connecting them with housing solutions and critical services. They also receive a variety of services from the county.

Last year 283 guests were given shelter from the biting cold. More than 3,800 people volunteered 33,000 hours last season to care for these guests who are homeless. By the end of season, 41 of these people had left homelessness behind and were housed.

This year's Hypothermia Response and Prevention Program began the Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend and runs seven nights a week through April 1. With the projected cold and forecasts of a very snowy winter season, demand is expected to grow.

To learn more, donate or volunteer, visit us at www.FACETSCares.org.

FACETS is a Fairfax-based nonprofit working to prevent and end homelessness.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Protecting Our Diversity

To the Editor:

I want to thank you for publishing the article about the Fairfax For All coalition's recent activities ("Advocating for Immigrant Protection").

As the daughter of two immigrants, immigration policy has al-

ways been important to me — especially as the debate over deportation and ICE has escalated. My parents were fortunate enough to be able to immigrate legally, and have been citizens for about 10 years, but in examining the data I've come to see that that's most likely to do with the fact that they are white and had college degrees. Our town is so beautifully diverse,

and I believe that we're losing an important part of our culture when immigrants are scared to participate in the community for fear of deportation.

If what Fairfax For All says is true, then there is an entire group of people in our town who are being excluded from important decisions, prevented from seeking medical attention, and afraid to participate

in the community — all out of fear. I'm learning just how important these relationships to the community, or social ties, are. They allow individuals a sense of purpose and help them to feel assimilated into this community that we like to profess as being so diverse.

Emma Steinhobel
Herndon

Fairfax
CONNECTION

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HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT



BY ROB CUEVAS/COURTESY PROVIDENCE PLAYERS

Ebenezer (portrayed by David Whitehead) in the Providence Players production of Rob Zapple's adaptation of "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens.



PHOTO COURTESY PROVIDENCE PLAYERS

Roxanne Waite portrays Mrs. Cratchit in the Providence Players production of Rob Zapple's adaptation of "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens.

Holiday Story of Redemption and Love

Providence Players present Rob Zapple's adaptation of 'A Christmas Carol.'

BY DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

For its Holiday Season production, the Providence Players are presenting a special adaptation of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" with an American Depression era setting. The Rob Zapple adaptation is directed by Beth Giles-Whitehead. She cast more than two dozen actors to bring the show to vivid life along with live Bluegrass music.

Zapple's "A Christmas Carol" is set during a bitter cold December 1933, in a down-on-its-fortunes St. Louis neighborhood. Times are hard. People are out of work and have lost hope. An unemployed Shakespearean actor and his manager run out of gas. The townsfolk agree to supply them with gas if they tell them the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim. "The story of Ebenezer Scrooge's redemption and turn to love and service for others will always need to be heard no matter how many Christmas seasons come and go," said Barbara Gilles-Whitehead, Providence Players director. "Our production will provide audiences the opportunity to see this familiar story through a different lens." Tiny Tim is played by Caden Mitchell (Mantua Elementary School), who said: "Tiny Tim is a really giving boy who wants to help everyone around him, even though he is one that needs help himself, due to his illness and disability. I like how much he loves everyone and they love him."

Talia Cutler (Kilmer Middle School) plays the Ghost of Christmas Past. "The ghost of Christmas Past has immense power and magic. She is a very different character than

Where and When

Providence Players present the Rob Zapple adaptation of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" at The James Lee Community Center Theater, 2855 Annandale Road, Falls Church. Performances: Dec. 7 to Dec. 15, 2018. Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. with Saturday and Sunday Matinees at 2 p.m. on December 8, 9, 15 & 16. Tickets \$17; seating is General Admission. Call 703-425-6782 or visit www.providenceplayers.org

Note: This production will benefit the work of The Young Hearts, a group of teens who raise funds to battle blood cancers and other diseases. Half of all net proceeds from this production will be donated to Young Hearts Foundation in pursuit of their mission. This year, The Young Hearts are raising money in support of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

what I normally play," Talia said.

Bob Cratchit is portrayed by Daniel Lavanga: "Cratchit is so utterly devoted to his family. He would do anything for them, including putting up with Scrooge's abuse day in and day out. And yet he is not a bitter man." Roxanne Waite plays Mrs. Cratchit: "The moral of the importance of putting other people above material trappings, the power of interpersonal relationship, and redemption are timeless. It's important to be reminded of such themes and we can always use a good dose of it."

Ebenezer Scrooge is played by David Whitehead, who said: "I love the change that Ebenezer takes from coldness and disdain to compassion and gratitude. There is no other story like it, it lifts my spirits just playing it."

The Providence Players production of Zapple's "A Christmas Carol" will remind audiences that even during the most desperate of times, there is hope with community and family to help shelter you.

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HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT

'The Dance Numbers Are Spectacular'

Encore presents holiday show, "An Invitation to Christmas."

BY BONNIE HOBBS

To Go

The dancers of Encore Theatrical Arts Project are kicking up their heels with glee, getting ready for their upcoming, holiday extravaganza, "An Invitation to Christmas." The show runs Dec. 7-16 in the Richard Ernst Theater at NOVA's Annandale campus.

In the story, the elves at the North Pole are super-busy with so much work to do that they need extra help. So they send out invitations to children selected by Santa to attend Elf-Training School. However, one of the new recruits is a full-grown man, and his classmates wonder why he's there. He does, too, since he thought he was going on a job interview.

The cast of 24 dancers, plus adult guest performers Jack Stein and Allen McRae, have been rehearsing since August, and Director/Choreographer Raynor van der Merwe says things are coming along really well. "We had our first, dress rehearsal and, suddenly, the characters came to life," she said. "And many of the performers are triple threats — dancing, singing and acting."

"Besides being a visual feast for the eyes, the show is uplifting — from the story to the music," she continued. "We have lots of

Show times are: Dec. 7 at 7:30 p.m.; Dec. 8 at noon, 4 and 7:30 p.m.; Dec. 9 at noon and 4 p.m.; Dec. 14 at 7:30 p.m.; Dec. 15 at noon, 4 and 7:30 p.m.; and Dec. 16 at noon and 4 p.m. Tickets range from \$19-\$26 via www.encore-tap.org or 703-222-5511.

Location: Richard Ernst Theater, NOVA campus, 8333 Little River Turnpike in Annandale.

new numbers, plus some old favorites. I look for music that might be familiar, but not something people will hear over the radio. So I choose songs that move the story forward, put people in the holiday spirit and let them escape this busy season for two hours."

The scenes take place in New York City, Santa's workshop at the North Pole and outdoors in a snow-covered, winter wonderland. And van der Merwe describes the costumes as both "colorful and glamorous."

"Everybody's working hard and has clicked really well," she said. "It's a great unity and, when everything comes together, it's magic. And that's what I love about theater — the community of it. No one does it on their own; the script, choreography, sets and lighting are among the puzzle pieces

SEE ENCORE, PAGE 14

From left: Ashleigh Wood, Kendra Walsh, Rithika Ashok, Tiffanie Jones and Myra Lawson strike a pose. Encore's Christmas show starts Dec. 7.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LINDA HELMS PHOTOGRAPHY





Encore's dancers always perform a Rockettes-themed number during their shows.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LINDA HELMS PHOTOGRAPHY



Multiple Santa Clauses will entertain during Encore's upcoming Christmas show.

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HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT

Submit entertainment announcements at www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/. The deadline is noon on Friday.

ONGOING

Red Cross Fundraiser. Through Saturday, Dec. 15 at Craffthouse, 11861 Palace Way, Fairfax. All three Craffthouse locations in Northern Virginia are donating 10 percent of all bottled beer purchases to the American Red Cross – California Wildfires Fund to assist those affected by the wildfires in California. Call 703-825-1811 or visit www.craffthouseusa.com for more.

Pop-Up Art show. Through Dec. 16 at Gallery 57, 11899 Grand Commons Ave., Fairfax. Emerging Artists Initiative and the Peterson Companies are partnering to bring an artistic and creative facet to the Fairfax community. A new pop-up art gallery at Fairfax Corner Center will exhibit paintings and sculptures by four resident artists in vacant retail space. Free. director@eaiinc.org or visit eaiinc.org

Glass National 2018. Through Jan. 13 at The Workhouse Arts Center, Vulcan Gallery, W-16, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. The Workhouse Arts Center presents its 3rd Annual Glass National exhibition. Glass National is a juried exhibition which promotes and displays the breadth of contemporary glass artwork being created throughout the USA and Canada by highlighting both functional and sculptural works. This year's juror is artist and educator Carmen Lozar, director of the Merwin and Wakeley Galleries at Illinois Wesleyan University. Visit www.workhousearts.org/event/glass-national-2018.

Founding Artists Exhibition.

Through Feb. 3 at The Workhouse Arts Center, Vulcan Muse Gallery, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Workhouse Arts Center presents a group exhibition highlighting Studio and Arches artists that have been a part of the organization for its 10-year span. In honor of their dedication and support, the exhibition will survey their works in various mediums including painting, sculpture, fiber, glass, precious metals, and mixed media. Visit www.workhousearts.org for more.

Second Saturdays.

6-9 p.m. at the Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Road, Lorton. The Second Saturday Art Walk is the perfect time to meet nearly 85 Resident and Associate Artists, creating art in the studios or exhibiting in our galleries. Visit www.workhousearts.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.

THURSDAY/NOV. 29

Genealogy Workshop. 6:30-9 p.m. at Pohick Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Anna Maria Fitzhugh Chapter, NSDAR, will have a Genealogy Workshop. Prospective DAR members will receive assistance with the application process. Contact 703-690-7136 for more.

THURSDAY/NOV. 29-DEC. 2

BalletNova presents The Nutcracker. Thursday-Friday, 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, 1 and 5 p.m.; Sunday, 3 and 7 p.m. at George Mason High School Theatre, 7124 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. BalletNova's Nutcracker has become a holiday tradition. BalletNova presents a brand-new production of the holiday classic with new



BalletNova Presents The Nutcracker

BalletNova's Nutcracker has become a holiday tradition. BalletNova presents a brand-new production of the holiday classic with new costumes, new characters and new choreography. The Sugar Plum Fairy is being danced by Willa Frantz, of Fairfax. Thursday-Friday, Nov. 29-30, 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 1, 1 and 5 p.m.; Sunday, Dec. 2, 3 and 7 p.m. at George Mason High School Theatre, 7124 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. \$18-42. Call 703-778-3008 or visit www.BalletNova.org for more.

IMAGE BY
RUTH JUDSON /
ELIZABETH LUCREZIO

costumes, new characters and new choreography. The Sugar Plum Fairy is danced by Willa Frantz, of Fairfax. \$18-42. Call 703-778-3008 or visit www.BalletNova.org for more.

THURSDAY/NOV. 29-DEC. 1

Holiday Book Sale. Thursday, 3-9 p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce St., Springfield. More than 10,000 like new books in all categories, most at \$2 or less, plus loads of CDs, DVDs and special gift offerings. Over 3,000 children's books, too. Funds raised will pay for our children's programs and more. Free admission. Email rbfriends@gmail.com or call 703-451-8055.

FRIDAY/NOV. 30-SATURDAY/DEC. 1

The Pajama Game. Friday, 7 p.m.; Saturday, 2 and 7 p.m. at Falls Church High School, 7521 Jaguar Trail, Falls Church. A musical based on the 1953 novel "7 1/2 Cents" by Richard Bissell. \$7. Visit www.fchsdrama.org or www.itickets.com/events/408638.html.

SATURDAY/DEC. 1

Holiday Extravaganza. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at South County High School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Lorton. Santa arrives at 8:30 a.m. courtesy of the Lorton Volunteer Fire Department kicking off the Candy Cane Kids Fun Run for kids age 12 and under. At 9 a.m., 170 vendors featuring all sorts of handcrafted items will offer everything from handmade glass ornaments and jewelry to soaps, lotions, clothing, and holiday décor. Cookies with Santa, free, 9:30-12; Fairfax Co Sheriff, Child ID and fingerprinting, free, 9-3; Santa's Book Emporium, 9-3. Proceeds benefit the SCHS All Night Grad Party, PTSO, Band Boosters and Athletic Boosters. Free, \$3. Visit www.southcountypthso.org.

Tyler's Mission Fundraiser. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at South County High School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Lorton. Tyler's Mission, in partnership with

Beyond Batten Disease Foundation 501(3)(c), strives to raise awareness and funding for research, treatment and a cure. Tyler's Stars will be holding a fundraiser during the South County Holiday Extravaganza. Visit www.defeatbatten.org to learn more about Tyler and Batten Disease.

Advent Festival. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at St. Stephen's United Methodist Church, 9203 Braddock Road, Burke. Open to all and designed with busy families in mind. Includes a Fair Trade Christmas Market, Christmas Concert (11 a.m.), Food Trucks, DIY Advent craft stations, free coffee and cookies and more. Free admission. Visit ststephensfairfax.org.

Christmastide at Gunston Hall. 10 a.m.-7 p.m. at George Mason's Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Road, Mason Neck. Holiday activities start with a visit from Santa to games and crafts for all ages. The evening hours provide a romantic holiday experience by candlelight as visitors sample period food in the kitchen and explore the grounds. \$15 for adults; \$10 for children. Visit www.gunstonhall.org/ or call 703-550-9220.

Joyful Music in Clifton. 4:30, 5:30, and 6:30 p.m. at Clifton Primitive Baptist Church, 7200 Main St., Clifton. Art Guild of Clifton presents Quest Singers in three holiday music programs, opening this festive season. Tickets not required. Free will donation sustaining Art Guild scholarship program appreciated. Horse parade at noon. Holiday Homes Tour, 4-7 p.m. Call 703-830-8466 or visit www.artguildofclifton.org.

A Cathedral Brass Christmas. 6 p.m. at Living Savior Lutheran Church, 5500 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. The Cathedral Brass will present "Christmas Cheer!" – a festive program of holiday favorites. The Cathedral Brass is a 23-player symphonic brass ensemble. Free. Visit www.livingsaviorlutheran.org or cathedralbrass.org for more.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/DEC. 1-2

Holiday Arts and Crafts Show. Saturday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at Audrey Moore

Recreation Center, 8100 Braddock Road, Annandale. One of Northern Virginia's longest running arts and crafts shows with plenty of great gifts to choose from. Top-quality handmade arts and crafts will be offered by 100 of the area's finest artisans. Admission is \$2 per person; children ages 12 and under are free. Door prizes. Call 703-321-7081

SUNDAY/DEC. 2

Christmas Musical: "Here Comes Heaven." 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. at Jubilee Christian Center of Fairfax, 4650 Shirley Gate Road, Fairfax. Jubilee Christian Center presents "Here Comes Heaven," composed of adults, youth, and children. There will be a reception with refreshments after the 11 a.m. service. The event is free. Call 703-383-1170 or visit www.jccag.org for more.

Concert: for King & Country. 6-10 p.m. at Eagle Bank Arena, 4500 Patriot Circle, Fairfax. Two-time GRAMMY Award winners for King & Country Christmas tour. Joining the duo on tour is Zach Williams. \$28., \$40., \$42.5 Reserved, \$78.50 VIP. Call 703-993-3000 or visit www.TheConcertSpot.com

TUESDAY/DEC. 4

Burke Historical Society Research Seminar. 7-9 p.m. at Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Preserve heirloom photographs and documents – photographs, letters, ledgers, and more. Virginia Room librarian Chris Barbuschak will share preservation techniques to use at home. Free. Email slawski_brian@yahoo.com or visit www.burkehistoricalsociety.org

THURSDAY/DEC. 6

Winter Wonderland. 4-7 p.m. at Insight Memory Care Center, 3953 Pender Drive, Suite 100, Fairfax. Join us Insight Memory Care Center in celebrating the season at their Winter Wonderland Holiday Party with treats, drinks, holiday cheer, and to celebrate the families, supporters, volunteers, board and staff members who support Insight. Visit

www.insightmcc.org for more.
Holiday Open House. 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Mount Vernon Governmental Center, 2511 Parkers Lane. Join Supervisor Storck, his staff and members of the Mount Vernon District Boards, Authorities and Commissions for a holiday open house. Enjoy an evening of refreshments, get to know the staff and tour the office. Consider supporting those in need by donating to the Blanket & Coat Drive for Refugees sponsored by the NOVA Relief Center. New or gently used coat and blanket donations can be dropped off at the Mount Vernon District Office until Friday, Dec. 7. RSVP by Dec. 1, appreciated but not required. Call 703-780-7518.

FRIDAY/DEC. 7

Holiday Benefit Concert. 7:30-9 p.m. at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 6509 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Celebrate the holiday season with candlelight and carols with hammered dulcimerist, Karen Ashbrook and friends Paul Oorts, Eileen Estes and Jamie Sandel. Free admission. All donations will go to Fairfax Area Community Emergency and Transitional Services (FACETS) and Ecumenical Community Helping Others (ECHO) to help people in need. Childcare provided. Reception to follow. Email foma@standrews.net or call 703-455-2500 for more.

FRIDAY-SATURDAY/DEC. 7-8

The Pajama Game. Friday, 7 p.m.; Saturday, 2 and 7 p.m. at Falls Church High School, 7521 Jaguar Trail, Falls Church. The Pajama Game is a musical based on the 1953 novel "7 1/2 Cents" by Richard Bissell. \$7. Visit www.fchsdrama.org or www.itickets.com/events/408638.html.

SATURDAY/DEC. 8

Winter Open House. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at Kings Park Library, 9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke. Celebrate the season with crafts, activities, seasonal music with a recorder ensemble and light refreshments for the whole family. Children can join Kingsley's Winter Reading Club by reading five books between Dec. 8 and Feb. 2 and receive a prize. Free. Call 703-978-5600.

Art & Crafts Marketplace. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Lake Braddock Secondary School, 9200 Burke Lake Road, Burke. Santa and his elves will be on duty for picture taking; gift wrapping available (all sizes welcome); vendors with something for everyone; babysitting for parents while shopping; food for sale; 50/50 raffle; drawings hourly and an auction. Contact Carrie Holmes, Chairperson at 571-205-9083 or Bob Gaylord, LBSS PTSA Second Vice President at 703-338-3033.

Night in Bethlehem. 6-8 p.m. at Franconia United Methodist Church, 6037 Franconia Road, Alexandria. Experience a live recreation of the Christmas Story. Free to the community and includes a living Nativity, manger petting zoo, crafts, and hot cider. Call 703 971 5151 or visit www.franconiaumc.org.

SATURDAY/DEC. 15

Jazz Brunch and Vendor Expo. Vendor Expo, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; Jazz Brunch, noon at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, 6560 Braddock Road, Alexandria. Fairfax County NAACP offers a Jazz Brunch and Business and Vendor Expo, featuring more than 40 vendors. Shop for holiday gifts and stay to enjoy the jazz brunch celebration. Proceeds benefit

HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT



PHOTO BY CARLA OLIVO

Stan the Stallion and Santa get ready to run a previous Candy Cane Kids' Fun Run.

Holiday Extravaganza

Santa arrives at 8:30 a.m. courtesy of the Lorton Volunteer Fire Department kicking off the Candy Cane Kids Fun Run for kids age 12 and under. At 9 a.m., 170 vendors featuring all sorts of handcrafted items will offer everything from handmade glass ornaments and jewelry to soaps, lotions, clothing, and holiday décor. Cookies with Santa, free, 9:30-12; Fairfax Co Sheriff, Child ID and fingerprinting, free, 9-3; Santa's Book Emporium, 9-3. Proceeds benefit the SCHS All Night Grad Party, PTSO, Band Boosters and Athletic Boosters. Saturday, Dec. 1, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at South County High School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Lorton. Free, \$3. Visit

scholarships and advocacy efforts. Jazz Brunch, \$65; expo admission is free. Visit www.fairfaxnaacp.org.

Pet Adoption Event. 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at Pet Supplies Plus, 11054 Lee Highway, Fairfax. Find a new forever animal friend with the help of the City of Fairfax Animal Control and Animal Shelter. Visit www.fairfaxva.gov/government/police/programs/animal-control/adopt-a-pet for more.

SUNDAY/DEC. 16

Tchaikovsky: The Nutcracker. 4 p.m. at GMU Center for the Arts Concert Hall. Experience this timeless holiday classic with the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra and the Fairfax Ballet. Enjoy a winter wonderland of dancing snowflakes, sugar plum fairies and epic battles between heroic toy soldiers and mischievous mice. There will not be a pre-concert discussion for this matinee performance. \$49-\$89. Visit www.fairfaxsymphony.org/nutcracker-1-1/ for more.

BHS General Meeting. 3:30-5 p.m. at Pohick Regional Library, 6540 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Cindy Bennett shares anecdotes from her new book Wicked Fairfax County, recounting events like the typhoid epidemic at Camp Alger, a 1918 murder in Burke, and, of course, the Bunyanman. Free. Email slawski_brian@yahoo.com or visit www.burkehistoricalsociety.org.

FRIDAY/DEC. 21

Moscow Ballet's Nutcracker. 4 and 8 p.m. at GMU Center for the Arts

Concert Hall, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. Experience Moscow Ballet's Great Russian Nutcracker during their Dove of Peace Tour, spreading goodwill in over 100 cities across North America during the holiday season. \$28 and up. Go to www.nutcracker.com for tickets.

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 26

Holiday Concert. 6-7:30 at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 2700 F St. NW, Washington, D.C. Featuring local Encore Chorale groups from Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, and Reston. Encore Creativity for Older Adults, the nation's largest choral program for singers 55+, will present the combined talents of more than 250 Encore Chorales and Encore ROCKS singers in concert. Free, the public is invited and no tickets are required. Call 301-261-5747 or visit www.encorecreativity.org for more.

THURSDAY-SATURDAY/DEC. 27-29

The Nutcracker. 2 and 7 p.m. at Northern Virginia Community College Annandale Campus in the Ernst Community Cultural Center Theater. Virginia Ballet Company and School will present its 68th season of the classic Nutcracker ballet. \$30 for adults; \$20 for children, students and seniors at www.vaballet.org. A limited number of general admission tickets is available for the Working Stage Rehearsal on Dec. 26 at 6:30 p.m. (\$10) at www.vaballet.org. The tickets for the Working Stage Rehearsal must be purchased in advance.

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SCHOOLS



Listening to the notes at the end of the run, freshman at Robinson Secondary Shailey Pratt takes in everything from the day's run for the show that upcoming week.

PHOTOS BY KHUYEN DINH/
THE CONNECTION

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Welcoming New Drama Teacher to 'Our Town'

Robinson Secondary welcomes new drama teacher and opens the season with Thornton Wilder's 'Our Town.'

The students of Robinson Secondary School welcomed the new drama teacher and are enjoying working with her on their fall production, Thornton Wilder's "Our Town."

Rambunctious Theatre Company presented the classic play during the second weekend of November. "Our Town" guides the audience through the town of Grover's Corners and the lives of the people in the town; following the lives of George Gibbs, played by senior Nico Ochoa, and Emily Webb, played by senior Erin Reno. With a cast of 23 students from Robinson Secondary and 60+ tech members, the students have worked tirelessly over the course of three months to prepare for four shows over the course of the second weekend in November. From the makeup crew to the actors, each student has contributed a vital aspect to the show. Everything was student designed from the poster design to the set. The sound design was performed live with a sound crew creating the noises in real time with the show.

"The show has a connection to every single person who watches it and it really makes you think about how precious life is," says assistant director Zachary Foley, who is a senior at Robinson. "It really makes you think about how you can live your life to the fullest." Zachary has worked alongside director Madeline Marshall



As her character joins in conversation with her father, senior Erin Reno and senior Cole Terra at Robinson Secondary enjoy their last fall play together of their high school career.



In the second act, senior Lizzy Lawrence and freshman Andy Lawrence walk across stage together, working together on a show as the siblings.

SEE 'OUR TOWN', PAGE 13


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SCHOOLS

'Our Town'

FROM PAGE 12

throughout the whole process, in order to gain an understanding of what he would like to pursue in his future.

Marshall is the new high school drama teacher at Robinson Secondary and is thrilled to start off the season with this play. "It has been an absolute joy to be able to begin working with the incredible students of Rambunctious Theatre Company. There is always a measure of intimidation when producing a show as well-known as 'Our Town,' there are so many schools of thought on Wilder's iconic piece. What truly impressed me was the brilliant creativity and thoughtfulness of all the students involved, both on and off-stage," said Marshall.

"They have brought so much heart and hard work to the play, which has made my job as their new teacher so much fun. Every day they impress me more and more, and have made me feel warmly welcome in the Robinson family."



PHOTO BY KHUYEN DINH/THE CONNECTION

Recalling lines in a vital scene between their characters in which they flashback to when their characters realized they were "meant to be", seniors Nico Ochoa and Erin Reno participate as the leads in 'Our Town,' having to truly develop their characters together.

With an upcoming season of "Almost, Maine," "Mary Poppins," and more, Marshall has a full season of shows with her students ahead and is thankful for the experience of working on "Our Town" to get to know her students.

Allstate Contributes to 'Weekend Food for Kids'

Assistance League of Northern Virginia's Weekend Food for Kids program was the featured volunteer service activity for the "Feed Your Future Volunteer Relay" that took place during the recent Allstate Insurance Company Regional Advisory Board conference in Washington, D.C.

Lynn Barron and Karen Amster, board members with the all-volunteer ALNV, were invited to attend and speak about Assistance League's impactful program that increases food security in three local school districts in the region. Assistance League provides bags of nonperishable food for at-risk children to take home on the weekends when school meals are not available who otherwise could be hungry.

Following the keynote presentation, the event turned competitive. Executives, regional advisory board members — exclusive agents and exclusive financial specialists from D.C., Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia — participated in a volunteer relay, packing food for hungry children.

Allstate Senior Communication Consultant Caitlyn Barron coordinated the resources and purchased the nonperishable food items to support The Allstate Foundation Helping Hands in the Community group volunteer event. A team of more than 40 volunteers packed 500+ bags of



From left: Karen Amster (ALNV), Caitlyn Barron (Allstate), Lynn Barron (ALNV) and Christine Angles (Allstate).

food for at-risk children whose families struggle to put food on the table on weekends when school meals are not available.

This partnership provided an opportunity to satisfy an immediate need for food assistance at two Title I elementary schools not currently supported by the Weekend Food for Kids program.

See www.assistanceleague.org/northern-virginia/

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HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT

Encore Presents Holiday Show

FROM PAGE 9

that must fall into place to make something unique and special. And with a live audience, each performance is different.”

Chantilly High sophomore Kate Persell portrays Jingles the elf, who supervises the children who've been invited to become elves. “She's really cute, but likes to stay organized,” said Persell. “She's friendly with the kids, but snarky with the adult trainee. I enjoy acting, and it's fun to play someone different from my own personality.”

She's danced with Encore since third grade and loves the many, different styles of dance. “I can get my energy out, it's a good form of exercise and I do it with all my favorite people,” she said. Persell's favorite dance is the “Once-A-Year Day” number. “All the elves are doing a hectic dance, running around like crazy, getting ready for Christmas,” she said. “There's no resting point, and I love rushing with adrenaline, the whole time. And when we do the final pose, it feels so good.”

Persell said the audience will enjoy the storyline because “It's humorous, with the businessman in an elf costume that doesn't fit him. The children in the cast are super-cute and talented, and the dance numbers are spectacular.”

High-schooler Bea Tremblay dances in the ensemble and portrays a mail carrier. “She delivers the invitations to the kids, as well as to the adult, George Parker,” said Tremblay. “She's undercover from the North Pole, so she's in New York street clothes. I wear a U.S. Postal Service hoodie and hat, plus gray slacks. She's a little mischievous and jolly because she knows she's handing out invitations to a magical experience.”

Tremblay enjoys taking her character in a humorous direction and working with the other actors and dancers. She especially likes the “Santas” number. “We wear big bellies, wigs, hats, boots and Santa costumes,” she said. “It's a high-energy dance, and 26 of us are onstage; and it's so much fun that I'm smiling the whole time.”

She's danced since age 10 and is in her fourth year with Encore's performing company. “The company creates a community, and the other girls and I support each other and have formed a family,” said Tremblay. “And it's so nice dancing together without having to compete. We can concentrate on the art and performance quality.”

Calling the show “fun-loving and happy,” she said, “We have lots of little kids acting, too, and they're really doing a great job. We've got bright and beautiful costumes, and the set puts you in the Christmas spirit as soon as you see it. We also have cool props, neat vocal numbers and a lot of actors who make it what it is.”

High-schooler Becca Perron plays Digits the elf. “She works in the mailroom and is very serious,” said Perron. “She doesn't like her supervisor, Dally, because she bosses her around. Digits also thinks Dally is lazy and she should have her job. She's fun to play because she's not like me, and being an elf is just the best time. I get to be over-the-top and really let myself go.”

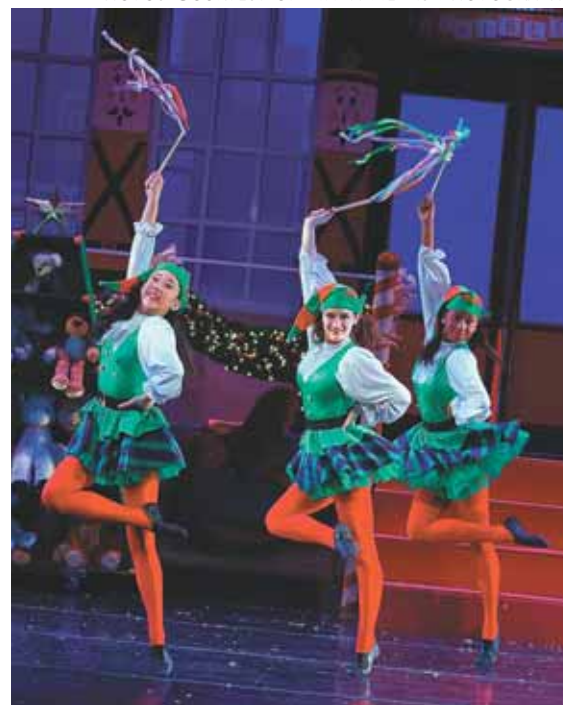
It's Perron's ninth year with Encore and sixth with its performing company. She likes the “Rag Dolls” number because, she said, “We get to make really funny faces and expressions as Raggedy Anns and Andys. And we especially like it when the kids in the audience laugh.”

“As a group, we put so much passion and love into our shows,” she continued. “So when we see a big



Dancers rehearse a number from Encore's new show, “An Invitation to Christmas.”

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LINDA HELMS PHOTOGRAPHY



From left: Faith Chin, Maya Tischler and Tiffanie Jones are among Encore's dancers.

audience, it's just the greatest feeling. We're well-known for our professional sets and performances that set us apart from other dance groups.”

High-schooler Faith Chun plays an elf named Cookie. “She loves baking treats and has an energetic personality,” said Chun. “She gets excited after making cookies and other baked goods, but is disappointed when they're all gone. It's fun playing her because of her energy, and I'm sometimes that way, too.”

Chun's favorite dance is “Rockettes,” during which the dancers wear white leotards with white fluff in back and have their hair in high ponytails. “I like that style of dance, with the kickline, and the number has both fast and slow parts,” she said. “We have sharp poses, so we have to really be in synch.”

Dancing since age 3, it's her seventh year with Encore. “Dancing is always my passion,” said Chun. “It makes me happy and is my favorite thing to do. It takes me away from my stress and schoolwork, and I really enjoy doing it.” Regarding the show, she said audiences will like “the storyline and the dance styles. It will allow them to connect to Christmas in a different way and is enjoyable to watch.”

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BULLETIN

FROM PAGE 3

unwrapped toys to benefit the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program, which will distribute those toys as gifts to less fortunate children in the community in which the campaign is conducted. Sheehy's Toys for Tots drop-off locations include:

- ❖ Sheehy Volkswagen of Springfield, 6601 Backlick Road, Springfield
- ❖ Sheehy Ford of Springfield, 6727 Loisdale Road, Springfield
- ❖ Sheehy Subaru of Springfield, 6571 Backlick Road, Springfield
- ❖ Patriot Harley-Davidson, 9739 Fairfax Boulevard, Fairfax

Christmas Wish Donations and Volunteers.

Koinonia is now accepting donations of unwrapped Christmas gifts so that their clients can pick out gifts for their families. This year Christmas wishes will be held at Franconia United Methodist Church from Dec. 10-12. Donations will be accepted through Dec. 10. Visit www.koinoniacares.org for a list of suggested toys and gift cards. Volunteers needed Dec. 9-12, call 703-971-1991.

Sponsor a Local Family. Through Dec. 14, Fairfax-based non-profit Britepaths (formerly Our Daily Bread) is seeking volunteers to sponsor families in need who live throughout the Fairfax County area. Sponsors are matched with an individual or family with demonstrated need, and may opt to provide a December holiday meal, and/or gifts for children under 18. Cash donations and gift cards are welcome to assist those who are not sponsored. A wonderful family, company or group holiday service project. Register and learn more at britepaths.org. Contact 703-273-8829 or jwalton@britepaths.org.

Toy Drive. Through Friday, Dec. 14 at local Weichert, Realtors offices. Members of the community are invited to drop off new, unwrapped toys at the company's sales offices. The toys will be delivered throughout the holidays in conjunction with local charities that assist financially and physically disadvantaged children. To find a local office, go to www.weichert.com/offices/.

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS NEEDED.

The Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke needs volunteer drivers for trips to medical appointments (Monday - Friday) and companion shopping (Tuesday, Friday) within the Fairfax-Burke area and in the South County area (west of Route 1, Alexandria). Office volunteers are also needed to work in the SCFB (Olley Glen) office to schedule rides. Bilingual volunteers (English and Spanish) are needed as drivers and office volunteers. Email Shavaun Wall at recruiter@scfbva.org or call 703-323-4788.

FRIDAY/NOV. 30

Application Deadline. The Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District is seeking a spring intern. Help to support the NVSWCD outreach programs, which reach thousands of people and have a deep impact on many youth and adults. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/soil-water-conservation/spring-internship-2019 for details.

Portrait of an ADHD Graduate. 10 a.m.-noon at Dunn Loring Center for Parent Services, 2334 Gallows Road, Entrance 1 - Room 100, Dunn Loring. This workshop will highlight the strengths and challenges of students with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, the effectiveness of parenting as a consultant, and more. Information and ideas for parents of children of ALL ages. Free to parents, educators and community members. Call 703-204-3941 or visit www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center for more or to register.

IEP Transition Plan. 10 a.m.-noon at Virginia Hills Center, 6520 Diana Lane, Multi-purpose Room #1, Alexandria. Join FCPS Career and Transition Services to learn the importance of the IEP Transition Plan for effective postsecondary planning in middle and high school. Have in-depth conversations with CTS staff. Free to parents, educators and community members. Call 703-204-3941 or visit www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center for more or to register.

Blue Christmas Service. 7:30-8:30 p.m. at Unity of Fairfax, 2854 Hunter Mill Road, Fairfax. knowledge loss or difficulty during the holiday season. Free. Email comms@unityoffairfax.org, call 703-281-1767 or RSVP at www.eventbrite.com/e/blue-christmas-service-tickets-52684194845.

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Mow, Mow, Mow Your Grass ...



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

... Not gently by the stream, and not by yours truly, either. Yet another task that seems beyond this homeowner's ability.

Which is fine by me because the older I get, it seems the less capable I become, and the less inclined I am to risk life and limb in the pursuit of that which that doesn't make me happy. Throw in a lung cancer diagnosis and the last thing my re-wired (figuratively speaking) brain will allow me to do is anything which doesn't put a smile on my face and a bounce in my step. And avoiding yard work ranks up there with most household tasks that a typical able-bodied homeowner takes pride in doing him or herself.

It's not so much that I take pride in avoiding it, it's just that I know my limitations, unlike Hal Holbrook in "Magnum Force."

Sharp objects, mechanical objects and/or electrical/spinning/rotating objects, objects with multiple doohickies (or a reasonable facsimile thereof), objects which require assembly/reading instructions are all challenging for me. Moreover, none of it fascinates me in the least.

What fascinates me more is the level of interest and passion with which so many of my brethren are engaged in the process; from start to finish.

I just don't get it. Nor have I ever gotten it, and neither do I expect to get it in the future.

Perhaps this total lack of interest comes from the experience of being a life-long renter. Never during my pre-college daze was my family ever responsible for yard work, home repairs (inside or out), or had much of a need for tools, other than the most rudimentary: hammer, screwdriver, pliers, etc.

No power tools. Nothing electrical that required a plug/proximity to an outlet. No plumbing, and of course, nothing like a chainsaw.

My parents were children of the Depression and all they had time for was school, play and some work; yes, even as children. And living in tenement/multi-level housing hardly lent itself to anything but doing what was necessary to survive.

But as my parents so often said: everyone else they knew was experiencing similar hardships so they didn't really realize what they were missing. Tools? Repairs? Amenities? Conveniences? Hardly. Toilet paper was a Sears catalogue cut into squares and hung on a nail in the bathroom down the hall - outside of their apartment.

They didn't have money or time for any of it. What money they earned was for food, rent, utilities and clothes; the most basic of basics.

It is through these experiences that my parents passed on their instincts and priorities to the their two Baby Boomer-era sons. There was ample love, affection and importance of family but not so much time and/or energy for interior and exterior home repairs, yard work, tools and what to do with them/how to use them as well as a variety of other homeowner-type tasks.

As a family of renters, it was never our responsibility. I suppose that was a match made in Depression-era heaven because very little in our family's past prepared us for this new future.

When my father returned from his service in World War II (working in Washington, D.C., actually), he had, unlike Liam Neeson, no unique set of skills. He had to find some vocation/avocation that would provide for his family - which he did, as a salesman.

After living in Dorchester, Mass. for their entire lives (since their parents immigrated to America in the early 20th century), in 1958, my parents moved the family to Newton Centre, Mass. - for the schools. We spent the next 15 years as renters and other than taking out the trash and the rubbish, I did very little to hone my homeowner-type skills.

I wouldn't say I've been stigmatized by this experience, but I learned very little that became useful in the maintenance and upkeep of the 275-year-old home, my wife Dina and I have occupied for the past 25+ years. Other than knowing how to ask for help that is.

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

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