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Sully and Zeke love to hike. They live in Oak Hill with Lindsey Smith and Jill Westeyn.

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No Property Tax Rate Hike; Fully Funded Public Schools

County executive presents proposed FY 2020 budget.

ANDREA WORKER

After several years of contentious budget wrangling, an increase in the tax rate, and negotiations forced to “kick-the-can” on many funding requests due to fiscal obstacles in a sluggish local economy, the proposed Fairfax County FY 2020 Budget still presents its challenges, but the county supervisors see progress and reason for optimism.

“There’s more good news than bad,” was Supervisor Jeff McKay’s (Lee District) reaction to County Executive Bryan Hill’s presentation to the Board on Tuesday, Feb. 19.

McKay is the chair of the Board of Supervisors’ budget committee, and while he and other supervisors still expressed some concerns, particularly over the additional monies required of the county to fund Metro, and the lack of funds to support much needed transportation and infrastructure improvements, the initial draft was generally met with a sense of “having something we can work with.”

McKay, board chair Sharon Bulova and others thanked Hill and county CFO Joe Mondoro for a proposed budget of \$4.4 billion that fully funds Fairfax County Public Schools, allows for raises that help align teachers’ salaries with neighboring jurisdictions and modest Market Rate Adjustments and longevity increases for county employees. The proposal also supports board priorities such as the Diversion First Program, Gang and Opioid Prevention efforts, Early Childhood and Environmental initiatives,

and staffing and training for the South County Police Center and Animal Shelter that the county hopes to see operational by 2022.

Thanks to an increase in property values last year, more commercial properties added to the tax rolls, and economies and efficiencies instituted by Hill and the county, the proposed budget achieves these funding objectives without suggesting an increase to the residential real estate rate — the main source of the county’s revenue.

“This Advertised Budget assumes no change in the tax rate of \$1.15 per \$100 of assessed property value,” said Hill.

Helping things along financially was Virginia’s economic recovery from the recession and from sequestration.

“Our growth has finally picked up,” said Hill, noting a decline in office space vacancy rates, an increase in government contract spending, and employment gains in the Washington Metro region that rose above historical averages in 2018. The county is also expecting a positive impact from the selection of Northern Virginia as a second headquarters for Amazon.

On the other side of the scale, Hill reminded that “no one yet really knows the true effect of the recent partial government shutdown.” In addition, the failure of the current General Assembly session to restore transportation funds to the region has pushed a number of projects further from their anticipated start or completion dates.

Without those funds, work to improve safety and traffic flow on roads like the Fairfax County and Franconia-Springfield Parkways will no doubt be negatively affected, according to Braddock District Supervisor John Cook, who added that “citizens need to know the facts, that even with 3 percent growth in the county, it’s still a struggle to meet our needs. We need their



PHOTO BY ANDREA WORKER

County Executive Bryan Hill presents the proposed FY 2020 to the Board of Supervisors on Feb. 19. A series of public hearings and district town halls are slated before the budget’s markup and adoption, with Hill urging citizens to learn all the facts on the county’s website and get involved. “Your voice matters.”

help.”

Several of the supervisors posed budget questions for Hill and Mondoro. The answers to their questions will be forthcoming at one of the Budget Committee meetings, and Hill also noted that the responses would be made available to the public on the county’s Management and Budget website.

While there is no assumption of a tax rate increase, other “non-general fund tax rate” service fees will see slight increases. Sewer Base Charges will rise from “\$30.38 per

quarter, to \$32.91, the Sewer Availability Charge (residential) will increase from \$8,100 to \$8,340 and the Sewer Service Charge will rise from \$7.00 to \$7.28 per 1,000 gallons.

After the Budget presentation, Hill, CFO Mondoro, and Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools Scott Brabrand held a joint Q&A with media representatives.

“This is a superintendent’s dream,” said Brabrand in his remarks, “to be able to work with a county executive and to have the kind of relationship we are creating between the School Board and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors this is the right way to do business.”

TO BRABRAND, this budget “puts the needs of students first, the needs of the school system first.” He expressed “delight” that the budget is “finishing the work to make our teachers market competitive ... we want the best and brightest teachers and support staff” so that the system can continue to provide an outstanding educational experience for the benefit of the entire community.

Brabrand vowed to continue the FCPS’s focus on One Fairfax to strive for equity in all aspects of its operation, and to continue collaborating with the Fairfax County government.

Hill ended on a positive note, saying that while he was disappointed that not all funding requests could be met as “we manage within our means to meet our 5 percent needs on 3 percent growth,” many unfunded priorities from past years were finally being addressed. He also urged citizens to “get involved. All of the information is readily available ... your voice matters.”

SEE 2020 BUDGET. PAGE 7

‘Passion to Investigate Past the Initial Report’

Rubinstein honored as Officer of the Quarter.

BY BONNIE HOBBS

Officer Thomas Rubinstein has been selected as the Sully District Police Station’s Officer of the Quarter for the fourth quarter of 2018. He was honored at the Feb. 13 meeting of the station’s Citizens Advisory Committee.

In nominating him for the award, Sgt. Joshua Shoemaker said Rubinstein is “consistently a top performer” on the Sully District Station Evenings A squad. In addition to his proactive patrol, wrote Shoemaker, “Rubinstein often takes the initiative to follow up and complete investigations on his own that would otherwise be forwarded to another investigative authority for follow up.”

Shoemaker said Rubinstein’s desire to see an investigation completed — as well as to provide victims a sense of closure — is “exceptional” for a patrol officer. He then gave

details of an investigation that highlighted Rubinstein’s “exemplary effort and outcome.”

Rubinstein responded to a scene to take a report of a larceny of a backpack from an unoccupied, locked vehicle parked at Braddock Park. During his investigation, he learned that the victim’s debit card had recently been used to make several, fraudulent transactions at multiple locations in the Burke area.

But rather than simply taking a report and forwarding it to detectives, Rubinstein continued his investigation, responding to a Walmart where the fraudulent charges had been attempted. He met with the store’s loss-prevention personnel and worked with them to track the subject via the surveillance footage from the register where the purchases were made.

“Once identified from the point of sale transaction, Officer Rubinstein continued



PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS

Assistant Station Commander, Lt. Todd Billeb (left), presents the Officer of the Quarter award to Officer Thomas Rubinstein.

his investigation by reviewing video from the parking lot,” wrote Shoemaker. “From his efforts, he identified the suspect’s vehicle.

“Later that same evening, while continuing his proactive patrol, Rubinstein observed a U-Haul box truck matching the one

being driven by the suspect. He identified the driver of the U-Haul as his suspect and initiated a stop.”

Rubinstein then conducted a roadside interview and obtained a confession from the driver. Furthermore, during a subsequent search of the driver and vehicle, the officer recovered much of the victim’s property, as well as evidence from other larcenies, additional stolen credit cards, and felony narcotics.

“Officer Rubinstein’s passion to investigate the incident past the initial report — and keen observation in identifying and locating the suspect vehicle — brought this investigation to a successful conclusion,” wrote Shoemaker. “In addition to bringing his own investigation to a successful outcome, he discovered numerous other victims and undoubtedly prevented additional crimes from taking place. For his continued dedication and commitment to the community, Rubinstein is the Officer of the Quarter for the Sully District Station.”



Michael Nashed (left) of MV Transportation Inc. hands bags of food donations to Robert Barbieri in the bus.



Manning WFCM's donation table inside the Colonnade Giant are (from left) Yesica Agents of Fairfax County's Neighborhood and Community Services and WFCM's Pamela Montesinos.



Carrying a box of food to the bus are (from left) Stone Middle eighth-grader Matthew Mennella and MV Transportation's Victor Lopez and Michael Nashed.

'We Are Grateful for the Support'

Community helps WFCM restock its food pantry.

BY BONNIE HOBBS

Community spirit was on display during the Stuff the Bus food drive for Western Fairfax Christian Ministries' (WFCM). Held Feb. 9 at the Giant grocery store at the Colonnade at Union Mill Shopping Center, it was part of Fairfax County's annual initiative to stock local food pantries in the winter.

From 9 a.m.-4 p.m., various volunteers greeted Giant customers and passed out fliers asking for donations of food or money so the nonprofit WFCM can continue providing food for local families in need. What was collected was then stuffed into a bus and other vehicles and brought to the organization's pantry.

"We received more food than MV Transportation expected," said Jennie Bush, WFCM community outreach manager. "We filled its bus, a police department truck and an MV Transportation personal vehicle."

"We are grateful for the support of our community which generously donated food and helped with volunteer needs," she con-

tinued. "One customer even took our list of most-needed' items and bought everything on the list to donate."

Bush noted that another customer bought and donated a grocery cart full of cereal, then returned to the donation area again with a second load of large bottles of liquid, laundry detergent and other needed food — and then went back to do his own shopping.

Impressed with people's generosity, Bush said, "The community response always amazes me. We couldn't do what we do without them, and any time we ask for donations of food, they respond. #neighborshelpingneighbors."

And when she needed last-minute help with an unexpected problem, the local police came to her rescue. "We had an unfortunate situation where we thought we had volunteers lined up this year, but something fell through," said Bush. "We put out a last-minute — at 5 p.m., the night before the event — plea to our community to help, and we got the volunteers we needed. Sully District Police Department officers, plus three auxiliary officers, came to help all day. Those auxiliary officers are volunteers, but they were really engaged, handing out fliers and collecting food."

In addition, a Boy Scout Troop leader also spent all day at the event. "All these people really made the difference in how many shoppers we were able to tell about the food drive," said Bush. "Also, two students from

SEE GRATEFUL, PAGE 7



PHOTO COURTESY OF JENNIE BUSH

Front row, from left, are Lilibeth Rioux, Natty Enriquez and WFCM's Jennie Bush; back row, from left, are Debbie Neal, Bob Mills and Giant Store Manager Ken Trask. Except for Bush and Trask, all are Northwest Federal Credit Union employees.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN WERDERMAN

From left are Al Koroma with Neighborhood and Community Services, Giant Store Manager Ken Trask, 2nd Lt. Ken Pfeiffer, WFCM's Jennie Bush, 2nd Lt. Deanna Weand, Sully District Supervisor Kathy Smith, PFC Meg Hawkins, Springfield District Supervisor Pat Herrity, and Capt. Dean Lay, commander of the Sully District Police Station.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WENDY LEMIEUX

Helping out are Stone Middle eighth-graders (from left) Connor Gary and Jack Woodward.

PET CONNECTION



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Sully and Zeke as Mario and Luigi

Sully, 4, and Zeke, 3, have brightened the Smith house since their arrival. While Daddy, Lindsey Smith, stays busy as chief of staff to Braddock Supervisor John Cook, Mommy, Jill Westeyn, spends her days as a Federal employee but volunteers many hours to the Fairfax County Animal Shelter and is on the Board of the Friends of the Fairfax County Animal Shelter.

Sully and Zeke love to hike and take naps on their loving humans. For Halloween this year, Jill made Mario and Luigi costumes and won a couple of contests. I live in Oak Hill in the Sully District, hence the pup's name.

Whenever I see former Supervisor Michael Frey, he never asks how I'm doing, only how Sully and Zeke are doing.

— LINDSEY SMITH



Dog Cousins

These doggies are all BFFs and cousins who love to play with each other. Sadly, Namche went over Rainbow Bridge earlier this year and we miss him dearly. From left, they are: Messi (Golderman Pyrgywhip), Magnolia (Border Collie), Namche (Golden Retriever), and Hobbes (Golden Retriever)

— BROOKE PALDAO OF FAIRFAX



Ninja



Horses: Morgan, Ruger, Cocoa and Traveler



Bambi

Living the Dream

I always had a dream of managing or working at a small hobby farm or working more with my hands and animals. I believe tasks that involve manual labor and being outdoors are good for the soul. I started volunteering at the Northern Virginia Therapeutic Riding center to test my theory that I really want to be around animals and I have been doing it for 3 years now and really like seeing the joy that horses bring to individuals with disabilities, youth-at-risk and recovering military personnel.

My dream was finally realized after 20 years of consideration when I purchased a 6.3 acre farm in Fairfax Station. I didn't have a lot of experience running a farm

and I knew I wanted a partner and I was concerned about investing so much in a farm at a time when I didn't want to take on more expense. I found a neighbor also interested and passionate about animals, barns, and animal therapy. We both believe in the healing power of nature and animals. We found many interested people to help out and that is motivating.

My neighbor and I took a chance and teamed up and we now have four amazing horses (Morgan, Ruger, Cocoa and Traveler), seven mischievous but loving Nigerian Dwarf goats (Ninja, Bambi, Cali, Moose Tracks, Sally Leonora, Suzy Q and Snowball), four friendly chickens (Henrietta, Veronika, Erika, Giesela) and two rabbits

(Thumper and Henry) and one parakeet (Javier).

My neighbor and I have a vision to bring pleasure to people that love animals, nature and being outdoors. We have seen the smiles on faces of children and adults that come to the farm. We want to bring joy to people that need an escape from daily pressures of life.

We are just getting started! We are only looking to do small group gatherings (the smaller the better) to keep the experience special. The animals bring me so much joy. They melt hearts.

We plan to offer horsemanship lessons, riding, birthday parties (small group), goat yoga and intimate farm tours.

Check us out on facebook at



Thumper and Henry

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— JOSEPH LOMBARDOZZI

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Senior Living

Giving Up the Car Keys?

Recognizing warning signs that it might be time to stop driving.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

Tracy Palmer didn't see the accident, but she received a frantic call that every parent dreads: her 11-year-old son had been hit by a car.

"We were on vacation visiting my brother and I'd gone to get coffee and my phone rang," she said. "My brother told that an 82-year old woman hit my son while he and a few of his cousins were sitting just off the driveway drawing with chalk. She never saw the kids and when she hit my son she thought she'd hit a ball, so she kept going. Thank God one of the neighbors saw it and stopped her."

After eight days in the intensive care unit, Palmer's son is on the mend, but Palmer who works as an attorney in Arlington, however, is furious that the elderly driver was allowed behind the wheel of a car in the first place.

Monitoring one's driving abilities is an essential part of our overall healthcare, especially as one ages. "There's no cutoff age for when a person should stop driving. But as we age, our joints can become stiff, our reflexes slow down and our ability to make split-second judgement calls or stop on a dime can become impaired," said Dana Kilgore, MSPT. "Our bodies also become more frail as we age, so the impact of a car accident would probably do more harm to a 85-year old than a 25-year old."

It is important for seniors and their families to pay close attention to the warning signs that it's time to reduce one's driving or stop it all together, says psychologist Donna Goldstein, Psy.D. "If you notice an increased number scratches or dents on that mom or dad's car, especially if they've always been a good driver, that could be an indicator," she said. "Getting traffic tickets, getting lost frequently, running stop signs

or traffic lights, those are all signs that it might be time to leave the driving to someone else."

Accepting the fact that it's time to stop driving can be difficult. "A driver's license isn't just a plastic card with a bad picture that you keep in your wallet," said Lisa Dombo, LPC, Ed.D, a marriage and family therapist in McLean. "It means freedom and independence. It's hard for anyone to want to give that up. That's one of the reasons why it can be so hard for people to convince someone that they need to stop driving."

That is a lesson that Naomi O'Conner learned one weekend this winter when she made plans with friends to take in a designer sample sale that was happening about two-miles from her house. Her 86-year old mother had agreed to babysit her 7 and 9-year old children. But the weather took a frosty turn and threw her plans into a tailspin.

"My mom lives a mile away from me and has always been my most dependable back-up babysitter for weeknights, but when the snow started falling, I knew that I could not let her get on the road in that weather," said O'Conner who lives in Bethesda. "It was for her safety and everybody else who'd be on road. Unfortunately, she kept insisting that

she would be fine and even became a little peeved that I was suggesting that she was too old. Too keep her off the road, I had to concoct a story about one of my friends getting sick and canceling the plans."

The thought of suggesting to a loved one that it's time to give up their car keys can be daunting. Dombo says that there are steps that one can take to make such a conversation less intimidating. "This is a very sensitive issue for many people because it means dramatic change in lifestyle and having less control over ourselves," she said. "It's important to be respectful and not talk to them like they are a child. Give specific examples instead of making general statements and try not to have the conversation alone. It's usually more effective to have the conversation with a group of family members."

Demonstrating an understand of the what reduced driving means is also important, suggests Goldstein. "You must show empathy," she said. "This type of transition can lead to depression for some seniors. Offering alternatives like gift certificates for cab rides or Uber or Lyft can be good. Coming up with a plan to remain socially active and to run errands and get to doctor's appointments. But this type of life transition is not easy, but it is possible to live a rich, full life without a car."

"... a very sensitive issue for many people because it means dramatic change in lifestyle and having less control over ourselves."

— Lisa Dombo, LPC, Ed.D

lost (adj): 1. unable to find the way. 2. not appreciated or understood. 3. no longer owned or known

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Announcements

SPORTS

Statesmen Take Down Bulldogs

In regional playoff.

The Westfield Bulldogs took on the Marshall Statesmen in a second round regional play off game in Falls Church on Feb. 22. Westfield advanced to the game having defeated Washington-Lee in the first round 58-55. Marshall advanced defeating Osbourn Park 74-42.

Marshall started off with 11 first quarter points, led by Ryan Schlaffer's 9 points, while Westfield managed only 4 points all of which came from Trent Reimonenq.

In the 2nd quarter Marshall balanced their scoring with Daniel Deavers scoring 8, Ryan Schlaffer 6 and Alex Pigeon scoring 3. Westfield's Marshall Reed scored 9 points in the quarter with teammate Tahj Summey adding the other 4 Westfield points. Halfway through the game neither team had been successful on a three pointer, yet Marshall led by double digits, 32-17 at the halfway point.

In the 3rd quarter Marshall increased their lead margin another two points, with all but four of the Marshall 15 points coming from Daniel Deaver. Deaver would tally 11 in the quarter. Westfield's Sam Johnson scored 6 points in the quarter while teammate Marshall Reed added 4, and Gavin Kiley added a basket.

With just eight minutes to play and trailing 47-29 in regulation Westfield still had fight in them and outscored the Statesmen 17-16, but were not able to stage a comeback. Marshall closed out the game with a 64-45 victory. Westfield's Marshall Reed scored 8 points in the quarter, including two 3 pointers to give him a game high 25 points, and Trent Reimonenq added another three pointer. Taylor Morin and Robert Black each added a basket. Marshall's Daniel Deaver scored 6 points in the quarter for a team high of 23 points. Jack Taylor added 5 points and ended the game with 9 points. Ryan Schlaffer scored two points and ended up with 17 for the game.

Marshall (22-6) moves on to the third round where they will face Patriot High School, who defeated



PHOTO BY WILL PALENSCAR

Marshall Reed lays in two of his game high 25 points.

McLean High School 65-56. Westfield ended their season at 4-22.

For the game Marshall converted on 12 of their 15 free throws. Westfield sank the game's only 3 pointers, all in the 4th quarter.

— WILL PALENSCAR

ENTERTAINMENT

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

FRIDAY/MARCH 1

Registration Deadline: Fairfax Adult Softball. Experience firsthand the enjoyment that only FAS softball offers with play for adult men and women in a number of different leagues across Fairfax County: Men, Women, Coed, Modified Coed, Social Coed, Fast Pitch, Men's 35+, Men's 50+ and Church. Team and individual registration now open. Visit us and register online at www.fairfaxadultsoftball.com.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/MARCH 2-3

Monty's Model Train Display. Saturday, noon-5 p.m. and Sunday, noon-4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Local model train enthusiast Monty Smith will display his running brick-built model trains featuring LEGO trains in this two-day event. Ages 16 and older, \$4; 5-15, \$2; 4 and under, free. Visit www.fairfax-station.org or call 703-425-9225.

SATURDAY/MARCH 9

Naked Tour. 1-2 p.m. At Sully Historic Site, 3650 Historic Sully Way, Chantilly. On this tour, visitors will

walk freely with their guides through the home of Richard Bland Lee, the first congressman from Northern Virginia. The usual museum barriers will be down. This tour is designed for visitors age 5 to adult. The cost is \$7 per person.

Call 703-437-1794 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/sully-historic-site.

SUNDAY/MARCH 10

Game Day Fun. 1-4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Fairfax Station Railroad Museum will host a Game Day for all ages and prizes as well. For the little ones there will be a Thomas the Tank Engine game. Older children will have a sticker scavenger hunt bingo game and there will even be a game for the grownups. Ages 16 and older, \$4; 5-15, \$2; 4 and under, free. Visit www.fairfax-station.org or call 703-425-9225.

SUNDAY/MARCH 17

NTRAK Scale Model Train Show. 1-4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Northern Virginia NTRAK members will hold a N gauge Model Train Display. Ages 16 and older, \$4; 5-15, \$2; 4 and under, free. Visit www.fairfax-station.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, or call 703-425-9225.

TUESDAY/MARCH 19

Live Music: Ryanhood. 7:15 p.m. at Amphora's Diner Deluxe, 1151 Elden St., Herndon. Acoustic duo Ryanhood got their first break more than a decade ago as street performers at Boston's Quincy Market. Ryanhood is on tour promoting their latest album, Early Best. Suggested donation is \$10 for members of the Folk Club of Reston/Herndon and \$11 for non-members. Visit www.restonherndonfolkclub.com for more.

SUNDAY/MARCH 24

Spring Make 'n Take Activity. 1-4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Make tissue paper flowers to welcome spring. Ages 16 and older, \$4; 5-15, \$2; 4 and under, free. Visit www.fairfax-station.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, or call 703-425-9225.

Live Music: Valerie Smith & Liberty Pike. 7 p.m. (doors open at 6) at Frying Pan Farm Park Visitor Center, 2739 West Ox Road, Herndon. Make plans to "hitch up the team" and head to Frying Pan Farm Park this season for Bluegrass Barn. Food and beverages available for purchase. \$18 in advance, \$20 at the door. Purchase tickets online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/frying-pan-park/bluegrass-barn or by phone at 703-222-4664 or 703-437-9101.

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Grateful

FROM PAGE 3

Stone Middle School, and a Boy Scout, stopped by to help pack food and load it into the truck and bus.”

As a result of everyone’s efforts, she said, all items collected will go toward helping the most vulnerable members of the community feed their families. She also expressed WFCM’s gratitude toward the Giant Foods Corp. and to the Clifton Giant at The Colonnade for hosting this Stuff the Bus event each year.

“The store manager, Ken Trask, orders food ahead of time to make sure enough is on hand, the day of our food drive,” said Bush. He specifically ordered some of our most-needed items for us to pre-bag in reusable shopping bags, which the store donated, enabling us to offer customers an easy way to buy a bag of food for about \$10.”

In addition, one of WFCM’s community partners, Northwest Federal Credit Union (NWFCU), sent five employees to the store, a week early, to help fill 200 bags with these items — sugar, black beans, canned peaches, tuna, spinach and canned tomato sauce — all top choices of WFCM’s clients. These were the food bags that were available for purchase by willing donors during Stuff the Bus.

“We are grateful for all the volunteers who made this day possible,” said Bush. “And thank you to the residents and organizations for their generous food donations for our pantry and the hungry families in our community.”

2020 Budget

FROM PAGE 2

Each district will host at least one budget town hall — with either Hill or Mondoro or both in attendance — before the Board of Supervisors holds public hearings and before the budget goes to “mark-up” on April 30, with adoption slated for the board meeting on May 7.

Public hearings before the board will be held on April 9 at 4 p.m. and on April 10 and 11 at 1 p.m. All meetings will take place at the Fairfax County Government Center in the Board Auditorium. Persons who wish to speak at a public hearing need to sign up with the Clerk by calling 703-324-3151, or by form at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosclerk/speakers-form. Written testimony for the record can also be emailed to the Clerk’s Office at clerktothebos@fairfaxcounty.gov.

A 37-page Summary of the Budget, a reader-friendly two-page highlights document, as well as complete information on the budget process, timeline, meetings and more are all available on the county’s website, search “budget.” Information on the town hall meetings can be found at

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget/fy-2020-budget-town-hall-meetings>.

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The Following is a Test



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Although you can adjust your television set, it’s probably wise to have juiced the battery in your cellular phone. Better still, use your landline – if you have one – thereby preventing a dropped call right in the middle of your interminable hold. Because the call you’re about to make – to a government office – is likely not going to be made to the correct number or the correct person or at the correct time or even to the correct department.

And should you be lucky enough to reach an actual person with your call, the explanation for your call/the problem you’re attempting to resolve, will no doubt result in a transfer which most likely will not be to the correct number, the correct person, at the correct time or even to the correct department.

Unfortunately, after perusing the government’s website, you’re just not smart enough to figure out exactly what number you’re supposed to call. (Is anyone that smart?) And therefore you are likely going to experience this loop-de-loop – without the upset stomach.

And what makes your attempt even worse? Hanging up, since your call might be “answered in the order in which it was received.”

Now presuming/assuming that a less-than-immediate solution will not be at hand, there are a few steps one should take in preparation to not make a bad situation worse:

* Allow for plenty of time. Do not make this call when you’re in a hurry, on break/at lunch or have a limited window of opportunity to complete your task. You will need to be in for the long haul, so to speak.

* Try to make this call when you’re able to sit/stand comfortably – for long periods of time. Moreover, make sure you have the privacy you need so that anything you say will not be heard (or held against you in a court of law) and any movements your body makes will likewise not be seen.

There’s something about being stuck on the phone for long periods of time waiting, waiting, waiting; talking, talking, talking; hoping (you’ll note I didn’t say expecting) to reach the right person and/or resolve the problem/get the answer which prompted the call in the first place, which rarely brings out the best in the person on hold. Quite frankly, it’s been my personal experience that it brings out the worst.

In addition to having the time and the place, one must also have the patience. That patience comes from proper preparation. And by “proper preparation” I mean the creature comforts: food, water and access to a bathroom.

The order really should be reversed with bathroom access first and foremost. Being uncomfortable, shall we say, after finding the time and place, and then making the effort to navigate the government’s website looking for the proper person, phone number, department and then in the midst of any success you might have accomplishing this Herculean feat, to have that very personal need interrupt the proceedings is the definition of poor planning.

Common sense has to prevail or the consequences may be dire; you might have to start your calling process all over again. I wouldn’t wish that on any one.

There is no greater satisfaction than surviving making one of these calls, and having done so because you put all of your adult Boy Scout skills to work. There really should be badge of honor one can earn after completing this dreaded and arduous task.

In fact, there should be some kind of reward. Although I imagine reaching nirvana (not listening to Nirvana) is its own reward.

Nevertheless, having survived the ordeal and endured the suffering for as many minutes as I care not to remember, I can say with absolute certainty, it’s a hell of a feeling. I wish you all well in your next pursuit of truth and justice despite the American Way.

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

Scout Troop 893 Welcomes Girls

Seven girls launched into Troop 893 at Centreville United Methodist Church.

BY STEVE HIBBARD

Now there's truly Family Scouting in Centreville. Seven girls were officially launched into Girls Troop 893 in a special Scouting ceremony on Friday, Feb. 1, at Centreville United Methodist Church (CUMC), the chartering organization. Now called Scouts BSA, girls ages 11-17 from schools in Centreville and Chantilly are able to join the Boy Scout level. CUMC currently sponsors three other units – Boy Scout Troop 893, Cub Scout Pack 893, and Venture Crew 893. Andrea Schuetz will be the girls Scoutmaster.

According to Michael Adere, chartered organization representative with Troop 893: "This is pretty exciting because girls have been involved in the Venture Crew for 20 years, and a year ago they were able to integrate with the Pack, which is Cub Scouts. Today is actually the official launch nationwide of girls' troops in the Scouts BSA. And these girls, like their boy counterparts in the boy troops, will be able to work up through the ranks, earn merit badges, and they will follow the same what we call 'Trail to Eagle' that the boys do currently."

He continued: "It's exciting for us because they've talked about this for a few years and now we're actually having it happen. That's what tonight's celebration launch is all about."

He added that the girls' troop will be a totally separate troop from the boys but they will share some resources at the adult level; they will interact with each other and join in some activities like



Past Scoutmaster of Troop 893 Shawn Morrow.

campouts.

How big of a milestone is this? Adere said: "It's actually huge because we've had girls in the Venture Crew, which is 14-21, for about 20 years. But we've never had girls in the Pack level, which is Cub Scouts ages 5-11, or the Boy Scout troop level, ages 11-17 up until this time."

He continued: "This is something we've been looking toward for several years. It is a big milestone. Because for the first time, girls will actually be able to join a girls' troop, similar to a boys' troop, and be able to earn the same merit badges, and more importantly, the rank advancements, the same as the boys — ultimately culminating in the Eagle Scout rank, which is the highest rank in Boy Scouts."

ACCORDING TO Paul Taylor, committee chair for the Boys Troop and Girls Troop: "This is a pretty big deal. I like that we can now welcome all youth to all levels of our Scouting programs. We have four different levels and they



Brian Staton puts the Scouting handkerchief on his sister Megan.

now can be involved at every level. So, we've had co-ed in Venturing Crew for a long time, but what I really like is that now girls can join both in the Pack level, when they're in elementary school and now their middle and high school can be in a troop, and earn Eagle, which is a huge deal."

Taylor added: "This is something that's been long in coming, it's been worldwide accepted and we are now stepping into the same arena as the rest of the world and having girls in every aspect of Scouting, so it's a huge day in the history of Scouting. It's a pretty big deal. Things like this don't happen very often."

New member Christina Alvarez, 14, of Centreville attends ninth grade at Chantilly High School. "Today, I'm looking forward to joining Boy Scouts probably because I think it will be a lot of fun and my goal is to get my Eagle (rank). My plan for the patches and ranks is to ask my parents to help me because my dad is the Troop leader for 1995 (at Deer Park Elementary), which is a dif-



PHOTOS BY STEVE HIBBARD

The girls of Troop 893 include (front row, from left): Jayna Farver, Isabella Pazos, and Rowan Causley. Back row: Caitlin Schuetz, Christina Alvarez, and Megan Staton.

ferent troop and my mom's the Advancement Chair for that troop so she has connections all over Boy Scouts.... I'm probably most looking forward to making friends and meeting new people and becoming eventually an Eagle, hopefully," she said.

Brian Staton, 13, of Centreville, who attends eighth-grade at Rocky Run Middle School, said: "I feel like it's a good thing that they're (girls are) getting a chance to do the same activities that we do, but I think it's also good that they're

getting their own separate troop. So, I feel good about it. I feel like it's a good idea and it's nice to finally have this happen."

New member Rowan Causley, 10, of Centreville is a fifth-grader at Virginia Run Elementary, who added: "I'm very excited and a little nervous at the same time," she said. "I play baseball with boys so I'm kind of used to it. I'm very looking forward to doing all this stuff. My dad was a Boy Scout and I've seen all of his outfits and stuff so it looks very cool."

Troop 30 Honors Its Three New Eagle Scouts

Troop 30 of Centreville honored three Boy Scouts — Spencer Bartlett, Andrew Tsai, and Brendan Selewski — who achieved the rank of Eagle Scout and were honored in a ceremony on Jan. 12.

Spencer and Brendan are seniors at Centreville High School and Andrew is a senior at Westfield High School. They were all recognized for their significant achievements and leadership in the ceremony at the troop's-chartered organization, Centreville Presbyterian Church.

Spencer performed an Eagle Scout project that consisted of painting a large U.S. map, multiplication table, and number lines on the playground at Centreville Elementary School.

His project allowed him to lead 10 people for a total of 65 man-hours. Spencer hopes to pursue com-

puter science at Virginia Tech or William & Mary.

Andrew performed an Eagle Scout project that consisted of building, painting, and installing an outdoor storage shelf at Bull Run Elementary. His project allowed him to lead nine people for a total of 70 man-hours.

Andrew hopes to pursue computer science at either UVA or Carnegie Mellon.

Brendan performed an Eagle Scout project that consisted of building and installing benches around a fire pit that was also rebuilt at Centreville Presbyterian Church. His project allowed him to lead 29 people for a total of 108 man-hours. Brendan hopes to pursue computer science at Carnegie Mellon, Duke, or UVA.

Visit www.troopwebhost.org/Troop30Centreville/Index.htm.



Andrew Tsai, Brendan Selewski and Spencer Bartlett.