

# CONNECTION

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Siblings Clara, 14, and Gavin, 12, toast marshmallows for s'mores. Fairfax City's 38th annual Festival of Lights and Carols was Saturday, Dec. 2. The fun included Christmas music, a holiday market, children's crafts, a petting zoo, s'mores and cider.

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PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

# Fundraiser for Earp's Ordinary this Weekend

Fairfax City comes together to support new music venue.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

Sure, new restaurants open every day without having to ask the community for financial help. But most are either moving into a former restau-

rant space that can be adapted for the new brand, are new construction or have the backing of a national chain with deep pockets.

But for Michael DeMarco, owner of Earp's Ordinary – the much-anticipated restaurant and live-music venue soon to open in Old Town

Fairfax City – none of those things apply. Instead, because his site is in the long-vacant, cavernous basement of a 70-year-old building, he's run into a world of problems while trying to renovate and restore it.

So this coming weekend, Dec.

8-10, he's holding a fundraiser at the nearly ready restaurant, underneath Commonwealth Brewery Co., at 10420 Main St., to hopefully obtain the remaining money he needs to bring this project across the finish line. And the local community is rallying to his support – because that's the way it is in Fairfax City.

In fact, in an online video in which other downtown business owners are urging people to attend the event, City Mayor Catherine Read said caring and compassion are a way of life here. "Every mayor thinks their community is special, but ours really is," she said. "It's in how we show up for each other – and our business community is showing up in how they're supporting Earp's."

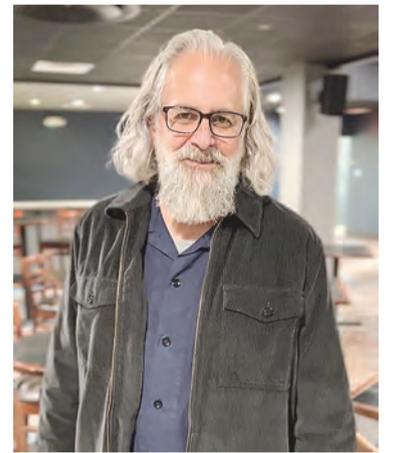
More than 20 musicians will perform Friday night, 5 p.m. start; Saturday, noon and 5 p.m. starts; and Sunday, noon start. There'll be a free buffet, a cash bar, plus possibly children's activities, and Earp's gift cards, merchandise and pre-sale tickets for its New Year's Eve event will all be available for purchase.

Fundraiser tickets at various prices are at [www.aftontickets.com/SaveOurStage](http://www.aftontickets.com/SaveOurStage). For a list of the performers, go to [www.facebook.com/EarpsOrdinary](http://www.facebook.com/EarpsOrdinary). Those unable to attend but wishing to make a donation may do so on the Afton ticket page or via [venmo@earpsordinary](mailto:venmo@earpsordinary). Checks payable to Earp's Ordinary LLC, 10212 Scout Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030.

Longtime Fairfax residents, DeMarco and his family have been active volunteers and supporters of the City's schools, businesses, government and community. And as a lifelong music aficionado, he's always dreamed of creating a space where local and touring musicians could showcase their talent.

He wanted to do so in a friendly, welcoming environment where music lovers of all ages could enjoy live performances. And with the motto, "Music, Spirits, Fare," delicious meals and drinks will round out the Earp's entertainment experience.

First, though, DeMarco needs to get the doors open. And for that, he needs help, due to the large number of obstacles he and his team have encountered along the way. So he's hoping the upcoming fundraiser will yield at least \$50,000 to go directly toward the venue's inventory, kitchenware (dishes, glasses, pot and pans, etc.), finishing touches and operating expenses. He also explained why the funds are needed.



COURTESY OF MICHAEL DEMARCO  
Michael DeMarco

"It's been pretty much a self-financed project, and I've already expended all this money to build out this 10,640-square-foot space," said DeMarco. "We completely gutted it and put in all new plumbing, electrical and HVAC systems. Trouble is, the building was constructed around 1953 – and when you get into working on an old building, you don't know what you're going to find."

For example, just one portion of the project that he expected to cost \$5,000 total ended up costing some seven times that amount. "We redid the concrete floor," said DeMarco. "But it was brittle and had a high moisture content, so I had to lay out \$30,000-\$40,000 to put down a moisture sealer and add an epoxy topcoat on the floor."

But that's not all. "We began work, pre-COVID, in 2020," he said. "But we had issues with the architect and general contractor and had to fire both of them and start over. Then there were supply-chain problems, such as the imported sound system taking a year to arrive from Italy. Because of its quality and price, said DeMarco, it's the one best-suited for the space.

Even more problems arose. "We're in the basement," he said. "So when Commonwealth Brewing did its plumbing and electrical, it was in their floor – but in my ceiling. I ended up with exposed plumbing, pipes and electrical lines that were unsightly. So we had to put in an acoustic, drop ceiling that cost \$100,000. It not only improved the room's aesthetics, but its sound quality, as well."

All these things added up to a huge price tag for Earp's. "We initially expected it to be a half-million or \$1.5 million project," said DeMarco. "But it'll be closer to costing a half-million to three-fourths of a million dollars more than that."

SEE EARP'S, PAGE 14

[WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](http://WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM)



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# NEWS

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Performing together are members of the Fairfax Choral Society's Youth Choirs.



Girl Scouts of Service Unit 55/6 singing several Christmas carols.

## Fairfax City Rings in the Holiday Season

**F**airfax City's 38th annual Festival of Lights and Carols was Saturday, Dec. 2. The fun included Christmas music, a holiday market, children's crafts, a petting zoo, s'mores and cider.



Tevin Renaa Parker sells her knit and crocheted winter wear at the holiday market.



Young dancers from C4 Performing Arts do a ballet to "O Holy Night."



Audrey Kremer selling her polymer-clay earrings and food serving pieces.



Ali Mir, 2, tweaks Rudolph's nose during Fairfax City's holiday festival.



The Fairfax Choral Society's Lyric Youth Choir entertains the crowd.



Siblings Clara, 14, and Gavin, 12, toast marshmallows for s'mores.

MORE HOLIDAY SEASON, PAGE 16

# What's Happening on Franconia Governmental Center Redevelopment Project?

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

A public hearing was set for Dec. 5 to consider 'the validation' and conveyance of property located at the Franconia Governmental Center to the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority. The property has an address of 6121 Franconia Road and is identified as Tax Map Nos. 81-3 ((05)) parcels 0002A, 0002B, 0002C1, and 0003A and Tax Map No. 081-3 ((08)) parcels 0503, Franconia District.

The public hearing has been deferred to Jan. 23 at 4:30 p.m., according to an approved motion by Supervisor Rodney L. Lusk (D- Franconia) during the Tuesday, Dec. 5 Fairfax County Board of Supervisors meeting.

The Franconia Police Station, District Supervisor's office, Franconia Museum, Kingstowne Library, and Kingstowne Active Adult Center currently on the five-parcel property will be relocated into a new 90,000-square-foot building on Beulah Road.

"My office has received phone calls, letters, and inquiries from constituents, civic associations, and homeowners associations to include the following: Brookland-Bush Hill, Clermont Woods, Kingstowne Residential Owners Corporation, North Franconia, and Springfield Forrest," Supervisor Rodney L. Lusk (D- Franconia) explained on Monday.

Two weeks earlier, on Tuesday, Nov. 21, in a vote of 9-1, with Supervisor Pat Herry (R) dissenting, the board approved a motion by Lusk to advertise for the public hearing date as Dec. 5.

The Code of Virginia requires that any such public hearing be advertised once in a newspaper having general circulation in the locality at least seven days before the date set for the hearing. However, the timing overlapped with the extended Thanksgiving weekend holiday.

"Thank you for listening to the community's concerns about the timing of the public hearing," Sh



SCREENSHOT VIA FAIRFAX COUNTY

The public hearing concerning the five Franconia Governmental Center Redevelopment Project parcels to be conveyed to the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority is deferred until Jan. 23, 2024.



Rodney L. Lusk



Penny Gross



Dalia Palchik



Pat Herry



Chairman Jeff McKay

posted on Supervisor Lusk's official Facebook website.

A second and different concern regarding the same matter questioned the insertion of the word "validation." Supervisor Penny Gross (D-Mason) questioned the staff about it at the Nov. 21 meeting.

"Part of this is a word we haven't seen before very often, and that is validation. How many other cases do we have in the pipeline that might need to have this look at the validation, about the validity of our previous actions?"

"It is only these two properties (Franconia and Braddock)," said Tom Fleetwood, director of the Fairfax County Department of

ment. Moments earlier, the board considered and approved advertising a similar administrative item, number 15, concerning advertising a public hearing to convey property at the Government Center to the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (Braddock).

At the time, Supervisor Pat Herry (R-Springfield) had expressed concern about the Braddock Admin item, saying, "I think we're putting the cart before the horse." Herry had said that a visioning study was underway, and the board was moving forward before it got the results.

The county plans to use the current Franconia Governmen-

affordable housing. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors transferred the 3.26-acre property to the FCRHA in March 2021 for the potential development of affordable housing, according to Fairfax County Housing and Community Development—Public Affairs.

Supervisor Dalia Palchik (D-Providence) pointed out on Nov. 21 that items numbers 15 and 16 had been pulled out of the list of other admin items usually voted on together and that the board was very committed to probably the biggest issue and concern they have in their county, "which is housing for all, affordable work-force housing at all levels."

housing for our work-force and for our retirees, as we heard earlier this morning, who are finding it very difficult to retire here in Fairfax County and in Northern Virginia. One of the very few assets in areas where we are able to help leverage the construction of these really remarkable, well-developed, well-designed housing projects is by looking at land that is either publicly owned or we have some faith community-owned land," Palchik said.

Although there had been extensive discussions in the neighborhoods, Chairman Jeff McKay said he was aware that not every resident had embraced them. "Doing what's right for the larger community doesn't always necessarily mean everybody is happy at the end of the day, but this is critical for us to address affordable housing in both of these locations," he said.

FCRHA has already sought a qualified developer to design, develop, construct, own, and operate, at no cost to the FCRHA, an affordable multifamily community under the terms of a long-term, nominal fee ground lease from the FCRHA. The total number of units on the property would be, at most, 120. All submissions were due by April 14, 2022.

Public Hearings: Citizens and businesses in Fairfax County are encouraged to present their views on issues of concern. The Board will hear public comment on any issue except issues under litigation, issues that have been scheduled for public hearing before the Board (this date and future dates), personnel matters, and/or comments regarding individuals. Each speaker may have up to three minutes, and a maximum of 10 speakers will be heard. Speakers may address the board only once during a six-month period. Individuals wishing to provide public comment must sign up in advance no later than 12:00 p.m. on the day of the public comment period, either online at

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosclerk/speakers-form> or by call-

# Four More Months in Jail for Cruz Colindres

## Vienna teen sentenced for Fairfax man's death.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

It was a tragedy all around – and it never should have happened. Two friends had spent all night playing video games and drinking themselves blind. They were having fun but, unfortunately, there was a gun nearby. And when a brief argument erupted, Darren Cruz Colindres, 18 of Vienna, shot and killed Javier Gomez, 20 of Fairfax – devastating not only the victim's family, but the perpetrator, as well.

The incident occurred March 25, in Gomez's home in the Fairfax Village Apartments. Fairfax County police initially charged Cruz Colindres with second-degree murder and use of a firearm in the commission of a felony. And for the past eight months, he's been held without bond in the Adult Detention Center.

The firearm charge was eventually dropped; and, on Aug. 14 in Circuit Court, Cruz Colindres pleaded guilty to the lesser felony offense of involuntary manslaughter. He returned to court last Friday, Dec. 1, to learn his punishment; and at that time, Judge Richard Gardiner added four more months to his sentence.

At the outset, Chief Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney Eric Clingan called one of the victim's older brothers, Alexander Gomez, to the stand to testify. There, he explained how Javier's death has affected him.

"I can't describe his loss," said Gomez. "It's an emptiness – a hole inside, like a part of me was lost. Javi was amazing; he helped our mom pay rent and wanted to buy her a house someday. He was there to help and take care of others, more than he did himself."

Crying, Gomez said, "All this pent-up anger about his death makes me lash out at my friends. I'd take Javi to school – he looked up to me. He was creative, energetic, ambitious and confident." Saying he doesn't care about his own life anymore, Gomez added, "I have

no motivation to keep going. I'm lost; I don't feel like I have anything to hold onto."

Indeed, Clingan told the judge, "There's a level of sadness that accompanies this case – shared by everyone, including the defendant, who knew the victim. And there's also a shared sense of anger because this didn't have to happen."

He said the two young men were friends, but still basically boys – and good ones who didn't get into fights or have drug issues or gang ties. "That night, they'd been drinking heavily – 31 cans of spiked, iced-tea lemonade – so the defendant didn't know what transpired," said Clingan. "They were sleep-deprived and intoxicated and came across a gun."

"The victim was killed, and there's a family who's been traumatized because of the defendant's recklessness," he continued. "And his actions that led to the death of an individual deserve to be addressed. This [incident] involved a loaded gun that demanded a level of maturity and responsibility."

"The defendant brought it into the apartment, but with no nefarious intentions. He probably wanted to show it off. But you don't have to put bullets in it and handle it – especially when you've drunk 31 cans of spiked-tea lemonade."

Clingan noted that the state sentencing guidelines for this case are probation because Cruz Colindres had no prior criminal record. But he said these guidelines should be exceeded, and he explained why.

"The defendant showed an utter lack of a sense of duty and responsibility," said the prosecutor. "A period of incarceration, around two years, is appropriate, plus three years' probation. When you use a gun and alcohol – and someone's killed because of your recklessness – there has to be a penalty."



Darren Cruz Colindres

But Public Defender Dawn Butorac asked that Cruz Colindres be sentenced to his time already served. "At the time, Darren was 18 years old," she said, also stressing that the 31 drinks he and Gomez drank that night in Gomez's bedroom included BuzzBallz – a potent mix of fruit juice and alcohol.

"The victim's brother heard the shot, came into the room and saw Darren on the ground, attempting to render aid to Javier," said Butorac.

She noted, as well, that the bullet took an unusual path within Gomez's body. "It entered through the left, upper chest and traveled downward to the right, mid back," she said. "That [trajectory] is indicative of an accidental shooting," said Butorac. "It was a tragic accident that no one anticipated. By then, they'd probably been drinking for eight hours straight. They had a brief argument, started pushing each other and the gun went off."

**"It was a tragic accident that no one anticipated."**

— Public Defender Dawn Butorac

Then, trying to illustrate Cruz Colindres's otherwise good character, she told the judge, "Darren began working at a young age to help his family make ends meet. And 23 letters of support from all facets of his life were submitted on his behalf, including one from his manager at Wegmans, who said Darren worked two shifts and took multiple modes of transportation to reach his job."

Butorac said the charge of involuntary manslaughter legally recognizes "the foibles of being human – because it was clearly contrary to Darren's intent. He was young and dumb, and his immature brain didn't consid-

er the consequences of 31 drinks. Teenage boys often lack impulse control and make poor decisions because their brains haven't yet fully matured."

"Darren is incredibly remorseful – he lost a friend," she continued. "He'll now be a convicted felon, with all that entails. It's a significant consequence for his future." Then, besides asking for time served, she suggested Judge Gardiner also require Cruz Colindres to receive anger-management training and cognitive behavioral therapy.

Clingan, however, didn't buy Butorac's explanation for the defendant's actions. "There's a whole county full of 18-year-olds who didn't do what he did," said Clingan. "Otherwise, we'd have an epidemic of teen crime. This was someone who made a bad choice that led to the death of a friend."

Then, before sentencing, Cruz Colindres stood and apologized for causing his buddy's death. "I accept responsibility," he said. "I know there's nothing I can do to bring him back, but I apologize to his family for the grief I've caused. I'm sorry for what I've done."

Ultimately, Judge Gardiner had the last say. "They were friends, but this was recklessness to the nth degree," he said. "I agree, the guidelines should be exceeded. However, I also take into account that the defendant surrendered himself to the authorities and acknowledged what he'd done. I also acknowledge the letters of support and that he was a hard worker before this incident happened."

The judge then sentenced Cruz Colindres to four years behind bars, suspending three years – leaving the defendant with four more months to serve. Gardiner also placed him on three years' active probation.

Speaking directly to Cruz Colindres, he said, "The conditions of probation are that you are to have no alcohol, whatsoever, and be regularly tested for alcohol use. You are to receive cognitive behavioral therapy while on probation, plus be gainfully employed. You are remanded to the custody of the sheriff."

### FAIRFAX NEWS BRIEFS

## Chanukah Celebration, Dec. 7, in Fairfax City

The public is invited to a Chanukah celebration and menorah lighting, this Thursday, Dec. 7, at Old Town Square, 10415 North St., in Fairfax City. Put on by Chabad of Northern Virginia, the festive event will include a gelt drop, firetruck rides, music and dancing, potato latkes, doughnuts, hot chocolate, a light show and prizes.

## Help Fairfax City Students in Need

The community's help is needed to provide food and hygiene products to Fairfax City students in need at both Katherine Johnson Middle School and Fairfax High. Donations may be made through A Place to Eat. Contribute via its Amazon Wish List at [amazon.com/hz/wishlist/l/](https://amazon.com/hz/wishlist/l/)

MWOA7SESUTMY.

Or make an online financial donation at [aplacetostand.org/a-place-to-give](https://aplacetostand.org/a-place-to-give) and or mail a check to A Place to Stand, 3609 Colony Road, Fairfax, VA 22030.

## Donate Holiday Gift Cards for Child Victims

The Fairfax County Police Department's Victim Services Division helps child victims and witnesses of domestic and sexual violence, as well as those who've lost a loved one to homicide. Many of these children are unable to enjoy the holiday celebrations due to the financial strain on their families resulting from being crime victims. So Division members are inviting the community to help them bring holiday cheer to these children by participating in their 10th Annual Gift Card drive.

From now until Dec. 16, they're seeking donations of gift cards for young and teenage child victims. These cards may

be for places such as Giant, Amazon, Safeway, Walmart, TJ Maxx, Target, Kohl's, local restaurants, and clothing stores. Gift cards empower parents and guardians to buy gifts and essential items – such as winter clothes and holiday food – for children who might otherwise go without.

Drop off or send gift cards to: Saly Fayeze, Victim Services Section, 12099 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA 22035.

## Donate to Toys for Tots at Fire Station 3

In the spirit of the season, the firefighters of Fairfax City's Station 3 are collecting new, unwrapped toys, games, books and other gifts for Toys for Tots. Donations may be dropped off at the station at 4081 University Drive by Dec. 18. This toy drive is sponsored by the City of Fairfax Fire Department and the U.S. Marine Corps. For more information, call 703-385-7940.

## Be Warmer, Healthier And Save Money this Winter

BY SUPERVISOR DAN STORCK  
MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT

It's that time of year again – the weather outside is frightful – well maybe not frightful yet, but it's colder! It can be a struggle to keep your home warm, whether from drafty windows, high heating costs and/or lack of money to pay bills.

The good news is that there are several programs available to help anyone in need, as well as those who just want to know more about how to keep their homes warm and save money.

Need help with your heating costs? You may be eligible to receive help through two energy assistance programs that are currently accepting applications.

Dominion EnergyShare helps pay energy bills for any type of heating and cooling source (wood, oil, natural gas, propane, kerosene, electric) for those who qualify. EnergyShare is not income based so any customer in crisis is eligible to apply. <https://www.dominionenergy.com/virginia/billing/billing-options/energyshare>

Fairfax County and Virginia Energy Assistance Programs are designed to help households offset heating costs and overcome energy emergencies that cannot be met by other resources. Energy emergency help can include heating equipment repair/purchase/maintenance and a one-time-only



Dan Storck

heat security deposit. <https://www.dss.virginia.gov/benefit/ea/>

Drafty windows and doors? Cold in your own home? Want to save money on your energy bills? If you answered yes to any of these questions, there are several programs available to assist with home weatherization. Improvements can include: LED lighting, low-flow shower heads, insulation, heat pump or A/C tune-up, air and duct sealing, ENERGY STAR refrigerator replacement and more. Get your free home energy audit today to save money and be more comfortable and healthier in your home.

Fairfax HomeWise Program educates, empowers and enables

residents to make changes that reduce energy use, water use and associated costs in their homes. Volunteers also assist low- and moderate-income residents with physical improvements to their homes and provide support for behavior changes that are proven to conserve resources and money. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/environment-energy-coordination/homewise>

Dominion EnergyShare Weatherization Program - <https://www.dominionenergy.com/virginia/billing/billing-options/energyshare>

Virginia Weatherization Assistance Program - <https://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/wx>

As always, my office is here to assist you, so please contact us at 703-780-7518 or [mtvernon@fairfax-county.gov](mailto:mtvernon@fairfax-county.gov) should you need help.

## Children's and Teen's Connection

Our annual Children's Connection, including the Children's Gazette, has been a long-standing tradition. We are once again welcoming contributions from children, youth, and teens in public and private schools, as well as homeschool, after-school care, and other programs, art and writing classes, and from individuals.

We publish images of all types of visual art forms, from drawing, painting, printmaking, and graphic design to sculpture, extended media, crafts, and more. We welcome written works such as poetry, essays, opinion pieces, and short stories.

Visit <http://www.connection-newspapers.com/PDFs/> and scroll down to the Children's Edition to see last year's editions. Our plan is for the Children's Connection/Gazette to publish the week of December 20, 2023, with overflow possible in January 2024.

### Submission Directions

Artwork should be photographed or scanned and provided in jpeg format. These can be submitted via Google Drive. Writing should be submitted in text format

(docx or Google Docs) or pasted in the body of an email. We ask that all submissions be digital so they can be sent through email.

### Identify each submission as follows:

<First Name> <Last Name>, <Age>, <Grade>, <Residence Location (Reston Herndon, Springfield, etc.)>, <Title of the Work>, <Medium or Type of Writing> | <School/Center Name>, <School Location>, <Teacher Name>, <Title>

### Artwork example

Sean Murphy, 12, Grade 7,

Springfield, Summer Morning, watercolor on parchment | Irving Middle School, Springfield, VA, Elizabeth Carr, art teacher, MS

### Writing example

Martina Alvarez, 17, Junior, Alexandria, I'm Not Just a Teen, essay | Mount Vernon High School, Alexandria, VA, Gratia Rodriguez, English Teacher, HS

Please email your submissions by 6 p.m. on Monday, December 11, 2023, [Earlier is Better] to Editor and Publisher Mary Kimm at [kimm.mary@gmail.com](mailto:kimm.mary@gmail.com) and fill in the Subject Line as Children's Connection 2023.

### NEWS BRIEFS

#### Don't Drink and Drive

Fairfax County Police Department's DUI Enforcement Squad ramps up at the end of every year to focus on Safe December. During this campaign, running from Dec. 4 to Dec. 29, the squad will increase staffing and focus on roadway safety this holiday season. These initiatives are aimed at promoting sober driving, pinpointing impaired drivers, and increasing officer presence on the roads.

In 2016, FCPD established a specialized DUI Enforcement Squad with the primary goal of identifying impaired drivers and removing them from the streets. The goal is that these efforts will serve as an educational reminder to all drivers, ultimately contributing to safer roads and preventing tragedies. The DUI Enforcement Squad has made 177 arrests this year so far.

#### 3 Million Digital Check-outs

On Wednesday, Nov. 29, Fairfax County Public Library (FCPL) reached a major milestone, 3 million digital loans for 2023. This is the first time the library system has exceeded the threshold since introducing OverDrive, FCPL's online digital catalog provider, in 2006.

Sabriel, the award-winning young adult fantasy novel by New York Times' bestselling author Garth Nix, was the book that helped FCPL surpass the milestone.

With this achievement, FCPL joins an elite group of library systems around the world. In 2022, only 37 libraries who utilize OverDrive hit the 3 million total digital checkout mark in a single year. To add a little more perspective, OverDrive's website reports that they serve "more than 88,000 libraries and schools in 109 countries with the industry's

SEE NEWS BRIEFS, PAGE 7

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Published by  
Local Media Connection LLC

1606 King Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

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# NEWS BRIEFS

FROM PAGE 6

largest digital catalog of ebooks, audiobooks, video and other content.”

FCPL uses Overdrive and its mobile application Libby to provide 24/7 access to the digital collection, which includes eBooks, eAudiobooks and eMagazines.

Readers can now access titles whenever and wherever they want using any major device, making digital materials more popular than ever.

While reader interest in digital materials has been increasing steadily over the years, FCPL has seen exponential growth since 2019, with circulation more than doubling in the three-and-a-half-year period. To meet this demand, FCPL collections staff has been hard at work expanding the digital collection to include more titles, as well as additional licenses for popular titles, with the goal of reducing long wait times. This work has been supported in recent years by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, who recently approved a \$300,000 increase to the library's collection budget, as well as the Friends of Reston Regional Library, who donated \$200,000 to the library in June of 2022 to support the development of both the digital and physical collections.

FCPL's digital collection is available for free to anyone who has a Fairfax County Public Library card. More information about the collection and how to access it can be found here.

## Borrow a Meter from Library of Things

Library cardholders in Fairfax County can now borrow a variety of testing devices from their neighborhood branches. As of Nov. 27, nine types of meters and readers are available for check out at 21 of Fairfax County Public Library's (FCPL) 23 locations as part of its Library of Things, adding to the growing collection of non-traditional items visitors can borrow for use in their own homes. The introduction of these devices aligns with the library's 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, which places emphasis on, among many other things, expanding the community's access to innovative technology and resources.

The initial batch of meters and readers available to check out include:

- Air Quality Monitors
- Battery Testers
- Carbon Monoxide Meters
- Kilowatt Usage Meters
- Laser Thermometers
- Moisture Meters
- On-Board Diagnostic Code Readers
- Radon Gas Monitors
- Soil Meters

Each device is available to check out for three weeks at a time and, if not immediately available, can be put on hold online or by visiting the information desk at any FCPL branch. More information about each of these devices can be found here.

After all, why buy it when you can borrow it.

Along with the meters and readers, the Library of Things is home to many other borrowable items that go beyond the bounds of traditional library materials, such as artwork, binoculars, board games, book discussion kits, Connect Chromebook Kits, Conserve Energy Kits, Hands-On History kits, Launchpad tablets, nature backpacks and thermal cameras.

To learn more about the materials available through the Library of Things, visit our Library of Things LibGuide.

## It's Not Too Late To Get Your Flu Shot

National Influenza Vaccination Week, Dec. 4 – 8, is an annual reminder that it's not too late to get a flu vaccine.

Different flu viruses circulate each year and the protection you get from vaccination decreases over time. Getting a flu vaccine every year is the best way to reduce your risk of getting the flu.

The Fairfax Health District is experiencing high levels of influenza-like illness with more visits to emergency departments and urgent care centers for fever (100.4°F or greater) and cough and/or sore throat. Based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) assessments and data since the beginning of the 2023-24 season, influenza activity will likely continue to increase into December and follow similar levels of severity as pre-COVID flu seasons.

Vaccination remains the best way to protect yourself and loved ones

SEE NEWS BRIEFS, PAGE 15

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A GAYLORD HOTELS ORIGINAL EXPERIENCE

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The 2023 Tribute award recipients represent the best of performance in public service.

# Police and Emergency Responders Honored at 18th Annual Tribute



Inova leadership attended the award ceremony including Roberta Tinch (center) and Dominic Bautista (right).



Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Department award recipients are Steven Chen, Volunteer Firefighter of the Year; Andrew Snell, Company Officer of the Year; Mike Salzano, Firefighter of the Year; and Miriam Pelham, EMT Medic of the Year.

**T**wenty-eight outstanding police officers and first responders from Fairfax County and Fort Belvoir were recognized at the 18th annual Police & Firefighters Tribute hosted by Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce and presented by Inova Mount Vernon Hospital.

Roberta Tinch, President and CEO of Inova Mount Vernon Hospital praised the commitment of first responders and told of her firsthand experience with their bravery and dedication during the Aurora, Colorado shooting in 2012.

Stories of persistence in solving crimes and dedication to community were shared as each officer was individually recognized. Supervisor Dan Storck, Supervisor Rodney Lusk, and Col. Joseph Messina along with departmental leadership helped present the awards.

Many award recipients were recognized for going above and beyond the requirements of their job both in their interactions with the public and in their support for other team members professionally and personally.

Receiving awards from the Franconia Police Station were Andrew Cox, Police Officer of the Year; Selah Rash, Detective of the Year; Gary Gaal, Police Volunteer of the Year; Kim Barber, Meritorious Service; and Travis Tate, Supervisor of the Year.

“Our first responders have a passion for helping others,” said Supervisor Dan Storck. “We applaud their commitment and need them in our community,” he said.

Recognized from the Mount Vernon Police Station were Kenyatta

Momon, Meritorious Service; John Buffington, Detective of the Year; Moises Romero, Officer of the Year; Juan “Rick” Lopez and Sharon Nichols as Auxiliary Officer of the Year, and Carlos Lama, Supervisor of the Year.

Outstanding personnel from the West Springfield Police Station were Steven M. Lescallett, Meritorious Service; Bryan C. Huntley, Detective of the Year; Jeffrey A. Sledge, Officer of the Year; James

“Tom” Gaetjen Auxiliary Officer of the Year; and Cary J. Petrovich, Supervisor of the Year.

Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Department presented awards to Steven Chen, Volunteer Firefighter of the Year; Andrew Snell, Company Officer of the Year; Mike Salzano, Firefighter of the Year; and Miriam Pelham, EMT Medic of the Year.

The Fort Belvoir Police Department recognized Philip Young, Police Officer of the Year; Chris-

topher Ferris, Investigator of the Year; Samantha Risner, Military Police Officer of the Year; Brian A. Thomas, Police Supervisor Officer of the Year; and, Heung Chu, Army Security Guard of the Year.

Honorees from the Fort Belvoir Fire Department were Adam E. Stover, Fire Company Officer of the Year; Johnny Roberts, Jr., Firefighter Medic of the Year; and Ryan C. Barlow-McCall, Firefighter of the Year.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

From left, Dr. Stephen T. Iuliano; Dr. Jessica L. Sommer; Dr. Joylene W. Thomas; Supervisor Rodney Lusk; Dr. Sali Jordan; Darryl Ernst, Senior Vice President, VHC Health Physicians; Anthony T. Burchard, Senior Vice President and Chief Growth Officer, President of the VHC Health Foundation.

# Medical Facilities Expand In the Kingstowne Area

Virginia Hospital Center cuts ribbon on new office alongside other Kingstowne additions.

By MIKE SALMON  
THE CONNECTION

The Virginia Hospital Center recently cut the ribbon on a new facility in the Alexandria part of Fairfax County that offers primary care, OB/GYN, cardiology, and gastroenterology in a central location.

The new center is located in the Kingstowne area where there are other plans to expand medical facilities.

Inova plans a full-service hospital alongside the existing Health-

plex facility that is now on Walker Lane, across from the Manchester Lakes Shopping Center.

Following the VHC ribbon cutting on Friday, Dec. 1, there were remarks from VHC Health's President and CEO, Christopher T. Lane; Franconia Supervisor Rodney L. Lusk; and Senior Vice President of VHC Health Physicians Darryl Ernst.

Also going up in the Kingstowne-Island Creek area is the new Franconia Governmental Center and Kingstowne Regional Library. The ribbon was cut for this center

in March 2023 and the construction is fully underway now.

This center will house the Franconia Police Station, the Franconia District Supervisor's Office and the Franconia Museum. The Active Adult Center will include

7,200 square feet of space; a new childcare center with approximately 10,000 square feet will offer care for infants through pre-kindergarten age children. The Kingstowne Community Library, currently located down Beulah Street, will be expanded to a regional library.



Artist rendering of the new Franconia Governmental Center and Kingstowne Library.

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PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Prepared to receive the caisson horses for rest and relaxation on a temporary basis, Meadowood's grassy idyll turned out to be insufficient to meet the greater rehabilitation needs of the horses

# Meadowood Pastures Still Wait for Hero Horses

BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

Suffering animals are not easily able to call attention to their plight, instead dependent on their caretakers to notice and react in their best interest. That includes a small group of voiceless heroes right here in Northern Virginia — the horses of the Army's 3rd Infantry Regiment, "the Old Guard" Caisson Platoon. These are the horses who transport military members to their final rest at Arlington National Cemetery. Those hero horses were poorly housed, with several in poor health for some time.

The Arlington's caisson unit came under increased scrutiny in 2022, after receiving 18 "unsatisfactory" inspection reports dating from 2019. Army reports outlined unsanitary and potentially life-threatening conditions for the horses, poor-quality feed, parasites, and housing in tiny mud lots scattered with gravel, construction debris, and manure at Fort Myers and Fort Belvoir. National attention was brought to conditions in the unit in Spring 2022, when two working horses died unexpectedly within 96 hours of each other. One horse, Tony, died with 44 pounds of gravel and sand found in his gut. The second horse, Mickey, died of septic colic, which can be caused by a gastrointestinal illness or injury that has gone untreated, allowing manure or bacteria to make its way into the bloodstream and causing an infection. Two more horses of the, originally, 60 horse unit were to die within nine months of Tony and Mickey.

Following those losses, the Army sought a temporary solution for improved pasturing and increased acreage. In December 2022, it

announced a partnership with the Bureau of Land Management, obtaining a five-year lease for use of land at Meadowood Special Recreation Management Area on Mason Neck. Under the plan, about a dozen horses were expected to pasture there on rotation, for two weeks at a time, under full-time supervision, while not performing their shift of ceremonial funeral duty.

Continuing review of the unit's conditions early in 2023 found that the horses were living in only about 18 percent of the space recommended by equine medical practitioners. Further, 27 horses had muscle and joint injuries, as well as hoof issues, and required rehabilitation. With insufficient healthy horses available, the Army first suspended caisson services at Arlington for part of 2023, later continuing the suspension until June 2024, to provide time for rehabilitation and to make improvements. They announced plans to buy lighter weight caissons, than the 2,500 pound versions then used, and better-fitting saddles and tack to reduce the horses' musculoskeletal strain.

The Army also committed to establish a network of expert advisers and contract with new trainers and farrier, hire a new herd manager, and improve the feed, to better manage the quality of life for the horses.

Funding of \$15 million from Congress was included for the caisson platoon in the FY2023 National Defense Authority Act, passed in December 2022.



PHOTO FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

Caisson Platoon soldier and one of 25 platoon horses at Fort Belvoir.



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

The acreage and new paddocks at Meadowood probably won't host caisson horses.

Meanwhile, with an agreement with BLM already in place for use of 14 acres, early in 2023, the Army had begun making improvements to prepare for the horses' rotating use of the Meadowood paddocks. Fencing, with multiple paddock sections, was added, with water troughs, hay racks, and temporary shelters. After consultation with Virginia's Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, pesticides were applied to target Milkweed and other plants growing in the meadows that are toxic to horses. By May, the scene at Meadowood looked idyllic and ready for horses in need of rest and space. But the horses never arrived.

"The pastureland at Meadowood was never a permanent option, but a short-term

solution while the Army developed its plans for long-term facilities and high-quality care for its animals," the Army's Public Affairs office explains. "The contracted equine facilities that the Caisson Platoon are currently utilizing provide tailored professional fitness training, quarantine for new horse arrivals, training areas, and rehabilitative care for horses not available in the pastures at Meadowood. The Army continues to work with BLM on the way ahead for Meadowood, and while it remains an option, the property does not meet the Army's immediate needs for the Caisson Platoon."

The Platoon is currently using stabling and pasturing at three locations: its mission support site at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall in Arlington; an exclusively contracted 37-acre equine fitness and training center near Aldie Va. in Loudoun County; and a rehabilitation care facility, Foxhall Equine, in Fallston Maryland. The herd is now at 53 horses. Twenty-three are in rehabilitation at Foxhall, 25 are at the Aldie facility, and five are working at Myer.

The 37 grassy acres near Aldie provide much more room to stretch than their former crowded paddock. The Maryland rehabilitation facility is spa-like, with available treatments such as hydrotherapy, aqua-tread, salt room, laser therapies, and a solarium.

Life is significantly better now for all the horses, thanks to the public and Congressional interest in their plight, and the Army's responsive action.

# SOIL AND SOILED

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



The 'burial party' volunteers, Will and Liam Pennell, Susan and Jeremy Freewalt, Matthew Wang, Jaquan Marin, Joan McGowan, Jady Colley, and Remy Pennell (center), interred cotton undies (actually baby's onesies) in two locations on Sept. 30.



Volunteers Sue Freewalt, Remy & Liam Pennell, and Mathew Wang cover and mark the location of cotton underwear buried to test the activity of soil microbes.

## 'Soil Your Undies' Campaign

Learn more about the dirt under your feet.

BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

**T**he battle against pollution, and against the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District's own anonymity, requires some creative approaches to getting their message out and generating interest. One of those recent efforts is a challenge called "Soil Your Undies." Surely a project title that teases a further read.

Remember the Conservation District? You recently saw candidates on your voting ballot in the November general election seeking positions on its board of directors. The sometimes overlooked department is carrying on with its mission to promote soil and water conservation in Fairfax County. Three newly elected directors will assume their duties in January, Dana Barakat, Rhonda Bitterli and Christopher Koerner. They, and the District's staff, seek to provide technical expertise to help residents bring conservation home, prevent pollution, reduce runoff, and protect our streams and rivers. They are not above discussing dirty undies to do it.

The challenge, offered to residents across the county, — bury a pair of cotton underwear, as part of a campaign to promote soil health awareness. How does it work? Just bury a pair of fresh, clean cotton underwear and dig it back up after at least 60 days. It's the quick, "and dirty", way to test the microbial activity in your soil. The more the underwear deteriorates, the healthier your soil. Although you can use the Soil Your Undies Challenge to check your soil health at any time, the most microbial activity occurs



Two months later, on Dec. 2, eager hands of volunteers unearthed the onesie to check for activity.

during the warm summer months.

The Laurel Hill Park Volunteer Team (PVT), a group aligned with the Fairfax County Park Authority, undertook the challenge in October to make a Fall assessment. With prior approval of the Park Authority, they dug two shallow holes to the suggested depth and buried new, clean babies' cotton onesies during a regular work session. One cloth went into a grassy area; one into a spot where a tree had been removed. The locations were flagged with notice of the citizen science project to avoid speculation about why baby's underwear was buried in the park should the apparel be discovered unintentionally. After burial and marking, the PVT merely had to wait the recommended 60 days, hopefully, enough time to allow microbes to do their work.



Volunteer Adam Choi, age 11, who has a particular interest in plants, holds the results, showing considerable deterioration.

Fast forward 60 days, to Dec. 2, and the team's wait for the reveal was over. Time to dig up the onesies. Healthier soils have a lot of microbial activity, and the healthy fungi and bacteria in the soil break down the cotton. The more degraded the undies, the more microbial activity in the soil, and the healthier it is.

What did the PVT discover? Shovels in hand, and acknowledging the expectation of lower activity in Fall than Summer, the team eagerly dug in the loose soil. They first found grubs and earthworms. Then found the undies and evidence of microbes at work. The undies could be located but with considerable break down. Those results. In



PHOTO COURTESY C. KOERNER

Newly reelected Soil and Water Conservation District Director Chris Koerner demonstrates his personal involvement in conservation, seen here removing invasive *Trapa* (*Trapa bispinosa*) plants, water chestnuts, which can quickly spread to cover water bodies pushing out native plants and injuring wildlife.

cooler Fall months, create an urge to repeat the experiment in the summer to compare the resulting activity in warmer temperatures. Citizen science experiments make a fun way to soil your undies.

If interested in volunteering for other conservation programs under the Conservation District, see <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/soil-water-conservation/volunteering>.

# ENTERTAINMENT

## DEMOCRATIC WOMEN LAUNCH HOLIDAY DONATIONS DRIVE

The Democratic Women of Clifton and Northern Virginia (DWCNV) is coordinating with Fairfax County Firefighters and Friends to the Rescue Organization <https://www.ffandfriends-2therescue.org/> to collect unwrapped toys for local needy children throughout Northern Virginia. The toy drive is the highlight of the holiday season for both the first responders and the young gift recipients. The project is headed up by Retired Deputy Chief, Will Bailey. In addition to toys, the organization will accept monetary donations to purchase at a discount new winter coats for area children. Each year, the department distributes as many as 3,000 new coats to more than 50 schools, shelters, and non-profits throughout Fairfax and Alexandria. To donate to Operation Warm to buy new coats: <https://secure.givelively.org/donate/operation-warm-inc/team-up-with-firefighters-and-friends-to-the-rescue>.

Unwrapped new toys for younger children can be picked up at your convenience. Email: Donna Netschert to coordinate a time and place: [villagetimesaver@aol.com](mailto:villagetimesaver@aol.com) or text 703-887-7147. Or they can be dropped off at Donna Netschert's at 12724 Chestnut Street (side porch) in the Town of Clifton by December 8.

Gift cards from Target, Best Buy, Old Navy or Walmart are welcomed for teens in amounts from \$25-\$40. They can be picked up or mailed to: DWCNV, P. O. Box 143, Clifton, Virginia 20124.

Monetary donations may also be mailed to the DWCNV at the above address with checks made payable to: "Firefighters and Friends to the Rescue".

Britepaths <https://britepaths.org/> is the other organization supported annually by the DWCNV. This organization provides programs that help stabilize families by giving them short-term food and financial assistance. Britepaths also offers classes, workforce development services, mentoring, and guidance to help families become financially independent and resilient. The organization welcomes donations of gift cards from local food stores such as Giant, Shoppers, Wegmans, Target and Walmart which are given to the families to pick out food during the months of January and February when holiday giving has come to an end and the need is greatest. In addition to donating grocery store gift cards, you may write a check payable to "Britepaths" and gift cards will be purchased for the families they serve. Mail grocery store gift cards and checks to DWCNV, P.O. Box 143, Clifton, VA 20124. DWCNV will collect for this project until Dec. 31.

Donations to both organizations are tax deductible and receipts will be provided for tax purposes. If you have questions, email [cliftonwomens@aol.com](mailto:cliftonwomens@aol.com)

## ONGOING

**Bull Run Festival of Lights.** At 7700 Bull Run Drive, Centreville. Drive through 2.5 miles of festive light displays. Open from now until just past New Year's Day. Drive the festival route from the comfort of your car; turn off your headlights and follow the magical glow. Hours are Friday, Saturday, Sunday and



Willie Bailey with Democratic Women of Clifton Co-Chairs Jane Barker and Barbara Levine.

Holidays from 5:30-10 p.m.; Monday to Thursday 5:30-9:30 p.m.

## SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO OUR PARKS

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

Holiday on the Farm at Frying Pan Farm Park. Fridays and Saturdays (Dec. 8, 9, 15 and 16) from 4:30-7:30 p.m. on Fridays, and 4:30-7:45 p.m. on Saturdays, Frying Pan Farm Park offers wagon rides, indoor activities, food, animal interactions, campfires and visits with Santa. Secure your \$15 pass during presale or \$20 at the gate for a festive experience!

Winter Wonderland Event at Burke Lake. Saturdays and Sundays (Dec. 9, 10, 16 and 17) from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Burke Lake promise holiday fun with train rides, Gingerbread Man Golf, and s'mores by the fire. Get your \$15 pass by Wednesday before the event, or purchase day-of for \$20. All passes include a visit with Santa, hot chocolate and candy canes.

## NOV. 9 TO DEC. 24

**Photo with Santa.** At Tysons Corner Center. Lower Level - Fashion Court/Nordstrom Wing. Mon.-Sat. 10 a.m. - 8 p.m. / Sun. 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. Tysons Corner Center's Santa Claus will arrive on November 9th, and be available for photos and personal time daily through December 24th.

## STARTING NOW

**Sip & Stroll.** At Tysons Corner Center, McLean. Shopping with a Twist will be in effect daily during center hours (10 a.m.-9 p.m. Mon.-Sat. /11 a.m.-7 p.m. Sun.), although individual restaurant hours may vary. Adult beverages must be in a logo'd disposable cup provided by the restaurant where the drink was purchased. Only alcoholic beverages purchased from participating restaurants may be taken outside the restaurant and into the shopping center. No outside alcohol is permitted.

## WEDNESDAYS THROUGH

### SATURDAYS

**Tours Aboard Tall Ship Providence and Sen. John Warner Maritime Heritage Center.** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Alexandria's Waterfront Park, 1A Prince Street, Alexandria. Guests of all ages are recruited into

the Continental Navy aboard Tall Ship Providence with legendary Captain John Paul Jones. Recruits are assigned jobs on the ship, learn where they will work and live, how to load a cannon, etc... Tours conclude in the Naval History Theatre with a film about the ship. The Heritage center is a floating museum on the Alexandria waterfront. Visit <https://tallshipprovidence.org/>

## FUNDAY MONDAY

"Funday Monday is open to children of all ages, however is best suited for the preschool set! Funday Monday runs from 10:30 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. and — unless otherwise noted — is held at Fairfax Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. There are plenty of free parking lots/garages in Old Town Fairfax. Stroller access is available at the side entrance Old Town Hall facing Route 236/Main Street. For more information visit [www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts](http://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts)."

### SCHEDULE

Dec. 11 -- My Gym  
Dec. 18 -- TBD

## BONITA LESTINA FAIRFAX

### OLD TOWN HALL PERFORMANCE SERIES

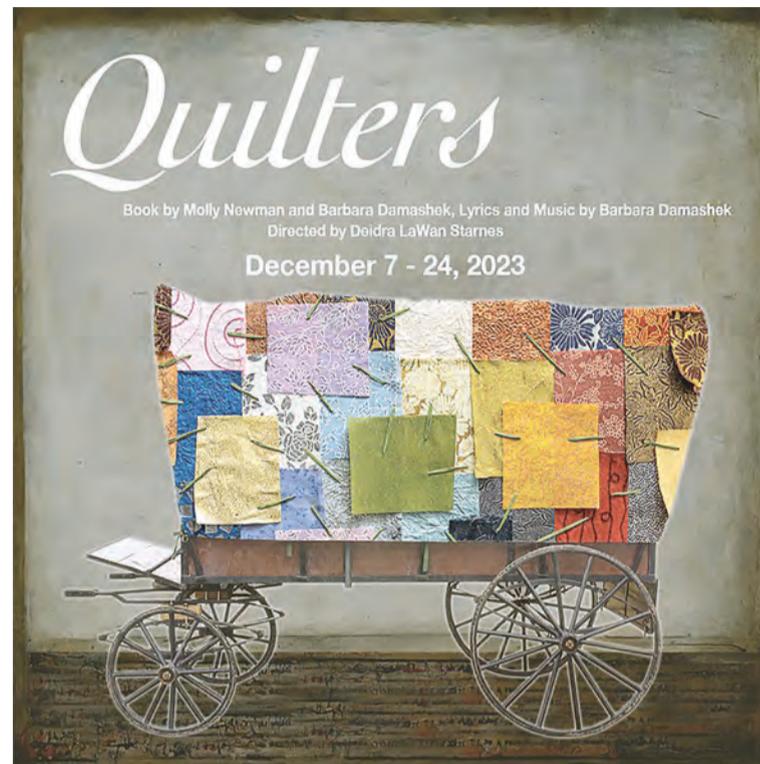
Enjoy an evening of music showcasing a variety of genres in the elegant interior of historic Old Town Hall (3999 University Drive) in the heart of Fairfax City. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. and performances begin at 8 p.m. and run from October to April. Admission is free. Visit: [www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts](http://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts).

### SCHEDULE

December 8: Marcolivia - Classical String Duo  
January 5: Baltimore Composers Forum - Modern  
January 19: Navy Band Wind Quintet - Classical  
February 2: Kadencia - Puerto Rican Orchestra (part of the Chocolate Lovers Festival!)  
February 16: Matt Trkula - Classical Guitar  
March 8: Mandoleers - Mandolin and Guitar Orchestra  
March 22: James & Victor - Jazz Duo/Steel Pan  
April 5: Francesca Hurst - Solo Piano  
April 19: Sylvan Waters Duo - Harp/Brass

## NOV. 3 TO FEB. 4

Eleanor Mahin Thorp: Metopic Ridge. At Tephra ICA at Signature. Tephra Institute of Contemporary Art (Tephra ICA) presents Metopic Ridge, a solo exhibition



"Quilters" can be seen at 1st Stage in Tysons Corner from Dec. 7-24, 2023.

by artist Eleanor Mahin Thorp. Thorp's paintings take us on an immersive site visit to examine the Blue Ridge Mountains exploring stability and change, the seen and the hidden within rocks. Through her discerning gaze rocks are more than geological entities; Instead, they metamorphose into vessels of history and human connection. Drawing inspiration from the fascinating transformations depicted in Persian miniatures, Thorp traces the hidden figures and forms in the rocks. Her paintings reveal the duality of rocks' existence as both a firm witness to time and a medium for that which is intangible.

## HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS AT THE WORKHOUSE ARTS CENTER

The Workhouse Arts Center will present several holiday events and activities in November and December for visitors to give back to the community, shop for holiday gifts, attend performances, take a class, and more. For more information, visit [workhousearts.org](http://workhousearts.org).

Toy Drive - Now through Dec. 11  
The Workhouse Arts Center is partnering with OAR NOVA, a local non-profit restorative justice organization, to give back to our community. Join us in helping families impacted by the criminal justice system by donating a new, unused toy in its original packaging. Toys can be dropped off in the Workhouse Visitors Center.

WinterWorks - Season Celebration - Saturday, Dec. 9, 6-9 pm  
Our festive WinterWorks event will feature holiday merriment, fun photo opportunities, carol singers, a Raku ceramics activity, dance demonstrations, hot chocolate bar, smores by a fire pit, and more! Admission is free. Art activities, food, and beverages available for purchase. Workhouse Arts Center Campus.

Holidays...Hallowdays Movie Screening - Sunday, Dec. 10, 2 pm  
While incarcerated at the Lorton Correctional Complex in the 1960s and 1970s, Rhozier "Roach" Brown

led the prison theatrical troupe THE INNER VOICES. They performed original plays, skits, and social dramas at a variety of venues including the Apollo Theater and the Smithsonian Institution. Cost: In place of an admission fee, guests are asked to bring a new unused toy to donate to the Workhouse Toy Drive. Building W-3 Theater.

New Year's Eve Musical Theater Performance - The Who's Tommy Sunday, Dec. 31, 8 pm  
Based on the iconic 1969 rock concept album, The Who's Tommy is an exhilarating story of hope, healing, and the human spirit. The story of the pinball-playing boy who triumphs over his adversities has inspired and amazed audiences for more than 40 years. The New Year's Eve show includes a post-performance reception with midnight champagne. Tickets \$50. Building W-3 Theater. See the website for ticket prices for additional dates and times. Show runs through Feb 11. Fridays and Saturdays 8 pm and Sundays, 2 pm.

New Year's Eve Comedy Show with Antoine Scott - Sunday, Dec. 31, 8 pm  
The Workhouse Arts Center presents, in collaboration with Rahmein Mostafavi, a special New Year's Eve comedy celebration. Time to laugh off 2023 and bring in 2024 with an abundance of joy! Join headliner Antoine Scott and a host of other hilarious comics for a one-show-only New Year's Eve comedy event. Tickets are \$50; \$60 front row reserved seats. McGuireWoods Gallery in building W16.

## DEC. 1-10

**Commedia Christmas Carol adapted from Charles Dickens.** Tickets are now available for Commedia Christmas Carol, which runs week-ends Dec. 1 - Dec. 10 at Traveling Players Studio in Tysons Corner Center. Performed by Traveling Players high school students, the play is an adaptation of Charles Dickens' haunting and heartwarming tale of traveling through time and learning the importance of



**The McLean Project for the Arts' Winter Exhibitions can be seen Dec. 7 to Feb. 17, 2024 at the McLean Community Center in McLean.**

kindness. To purchase tickets, and for more information about the show, visit <https://www.travelingplayers.org/performances/>

#### DEC. 7-24

**"Quilters."** At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons. Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 2 and 8 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. Set on the American frontier, this moving musical tells the story of a group of women who come together to create a quilt that reflects their shared history, struggles, and triumphs. Visit [www.1ststage.org](http://www.1ststage.org) or call 703-854-1856.

#### DEC. 7 TO FEB. 17

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

#### THURSDAY/DEC. 7

**Traditional Christmas Market.** 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. At 11150 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston. In the enchanting atmosphere, you'll find German food and drinks, delicious sweet treats, children's entertainment, and handcrafted gifts and ornaments. The Christmas Market is a wonderful way to celebrate the holiday season with family and friends—and make a difference in the community at the same time. Admission: Adults \$10 and Children \$5. Includes one food voucher, Cash only. Proceeds benefit The Friends of Reston and Food For Neighbors. No pets allowed, except service animals.

#### THURSDAY/DEC. 7

**Foreign Language Film.** 1 p.m. At The Alden Theater, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The Alden's foreign language movie series is curated by Performing Arts Director Sarah Schallern Treff, with more than a little help from you, our audience members! The series has a few surprises thrown in. The schedule is subject to change. Check [aldentheatre.org](http://aldentheatre.org) for more details.

#### THURSDAY/DEC. 7

**"Tři Oříšky pro Popelku" ("Three Wishes for Cinderella") Foreign Language Film.** 1 p.m. At The Alden at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. A retelling of the "Cinderella" story in a wintery landscape and with hazelnuts rather than a fairy godmother. This 1973 movie has become a holiday classic all over Europe and is annually shown on TV from Spain to Russia.

#### FRIDAY/DEC. 8

**American Red Cross Blood Drive.** 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Join MCC and support the community. [www.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](http://www.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM)

nity with your lifesaving blood donation. All donors will receive a \$10 Amazon Gift Card via email. For an appointment, visit [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org) and enter sponsor word: HEARTOFGOLD or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767). Eligibility Questions: Call 1-866-236-3276. Questions? Contact Melanie Hurley at [melanie.hurley@heartogold.org](mailto:melanie.hurley@heartogold.org).

#### FRIDAY/DEC. 8

**5th and 6th Grader Ugly Sweater Party.** 7-9:30 p.m. At the Old Firehouse, McLean. The Old Firehouse 5th & 6th Grader Parties are themed and decorated accordingly. Partygoers can enjoy free catered food and beverages, a DJ spinning the latest tunes, an open dance floor and a variety of other attractions and activities.

#### DEC. 8-10

**Capital Art & Craft Festival.** At the Dulles Expo Center, Chantilly. More than 300 juried artisans will be taking over two Dulles Expo Center halls. The Capital Art & Craft Festival ([www.CACF.art](http://www.CACF.art)) will feature handcrafted, one of a kind art in more than a dozen mediums including glass, jewelry, leather, paintings, prints, photography, pottery, wearable art and wood. It has always been the largest indoor arts festival in Northern Virginia and now increases to two of the Expo Center's facilities with 36,000 square-feet of exhibit space. Hours are Friday, Dec. 8 and Saturday Dec. 9: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Sunday Dec. 10: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Ticket information: [www.CACF.art](http://www.CACF.art)

#### SATURDAY/DEC. 9

**"The Snowman in Concert."** 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. At James Madison High School, Vienna. The JMHS Choral and Orchestra Departments will again host this magical family holiday event. Watch the film based on Raymond Briggs' "The Snowman" book but with live choral and orchestra music accompaniment. After the film, walk through the winter wonderland and enjoy crafts and a chance to take pictures with the Snowman and Santa! Purchase tickets on the Madison High School website using the link in the features section - or by typing Snowman into the search bar. Tickets will only be available at the door if the event isn't sold out.

#### SATURDAY/DEC. 9

**Holiday Pops: Songs of the Season.** 4 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Featuring the American Festival Pops Orchestra with Peter Wilson, conductor. The American Festival Pops Orchestra presents Holiday Pops: Songs of the Season, a cherished tradition and Center for the Arts audience favorite. Gather 'round for this annual concert that is sure to warm hearts and spread cheer.

#### SATURDAY/DEC. 9

**The Wonder of the Season.** 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. At Reston Community Center, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. Experience The Wonder of the Season with a concert of sacred and secular holiday music, from Donny Hathaway's This Christmas and a Nutcracker Ballet-inspired twist on Jingle Bells to Francesco Durante's Magnificat. Adding to the delightful mix of music in this family-friendly concert, they'll be joined by members of South Lakes High School Vocal Arts at the 4 p.m. show, and the Treble and Youth Choirs of Saint John the Beloved and Saint John the Apostle at the 7 p.m. show. Tickets: \$30 Adults 18-61 | \$25 Seniors 62+ | Free Youth 17/under & Active Duty Military.

#### SATURDAY/DEC. 9

**"It's a Jazzy Christmas."** 7 p.m. At The Alden at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. "It's a Jazzy Christmas" is nonstop entertainment with a house band and a parade of notable DMV jazz artists. Tickets are \$30 for the general public, \$25 for students and seniors and \$20 for MCC district residents. Hosted by NBC4 News Reporter Mark Segreaves, the show features headliner

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 15

## Obituary

## Obituary

**Russell Rees Llewellyn Jr.**, of Fairfax, Virginia passed away unexpectedly on November 8, 2023, at the age of 78. A native of Berwick, Pennsylvania, Rees was a remarkable man and devoted band director who left an indelible mark on the lives of those he touched.

Born on July 18, 1945, Rees weighed almost 10 pounds and was frank breech resulting in a displaced hip and required a full body cast to correct the problem. This created an unstoppable drive in Rees that would carry on and only grow fiercer throughout his life where the phrase "Never give up" became his motto. Later in life Rees had a full hip replacement.

In the early years of his life, Rees discovered a deep passion for basketball, and golf. He had fond memories of sneaking onto the Berwick golf course at night and fishing out golf balls from the ponds with his best friend Tim Lurowist. Rees continued playing golf and basketball in and after college. He was captain of the golf team at Dickinson College, where he graduated with his BA in Music and English in 1967. Rees also developed and played on the recreational basketball team at Dickinson. Rees went to college intending to be a Dentist only to realize he did not have the stomach for needles. Rees came from a very musical family which heavily influenced him. His father, Russell Rees Llewellyn Sr. (Russ or Prof) performed in Vaudeville, studied music at Ithaca and had a very successful music career that led him into becoming the Band Director for Berwick High School, where he was largely respected. His mother, Louise Hartman Llewellyn, was a talented operatic coloratura with the capability to memorize any piece of music. Their influence led Rees to pursue an education in music. He wanted to go to Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and, though there was no formal music program there, Rees sat with the Board and collaborated with them to become the first Music Major at Dickinson College with a music studies program designed solely for him. This program has grown, flourished, and is now one of the Dickinson College's curriculum-based programs. Rees joined the Phi Kappa Sigma fraternity and lived a true "Animal House" experience, filled with laughter and unforgettable adventures. His fraternity brothers had a profound developmental impact on Rees, and they stayed in touch until his recent passing. Rees received his M.A. in Music Education, from Temple University in 1974.

After Graduating from Dickinson, Rees became the Band Director for Camp Hill High School, Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, in 1967. This was for a short period of time (due to furthering his studies at Temple University) but left a lasting impression. His passion for music extended beyond the classroom. In 1969, his Camp Hill High School marching band was chosen to march in the Orange Bowl, showcasing both his and the band's dedication and talent. This was one of his most celebrated accomplishments. He leaves behind a legacy of musical excellence and leadership. His devotion to his band influenced the lives of his students who have continued to stay in contact with him throughout the years. They still celebrate "Mr. Llewellyn" and how hard he made them work, recounting the many valuable life lessons they learned from him.

Rees also built a very successful career in government contracting and Federal sales. He started with 3M Co. in 1978 as a salesman and was eventually promoted to Director of Government Optical Recording Projects. In 1984, he was hired by General Dynamics as Director of DOD Sales and Marketing and was with them until 1989. In 1989, Rees accepted a position with Roll Systems, Inc., where he spent sixteen successful years growing his career as Director of Federal Sales and Marketing. Rees attempted to retire but found himself bored and uneasy without an outlet for the work competition he enjoyed. He worked for Vydek for a few years and then for MEC Development in 2022. It is no surprise that "Whistle While You Work" and "The Little Engine That Could" were favorites of his.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, he was a loving father and Papa (grandfather), embodying the qualities of kindness, guidance, and unwavering support. He spent almost every day with his daughter, Katie, and grandchildren. He centered his world around their shared joy, safety, security, and happiness. He devoted himself to being there, until his passing.

Papa Rees played cards with his grandchildren, teaching them the ways of war and go fish. He was magical and large. His grandchildren loved to snuggle him, paint his nails, play all sorts of games, watch movies and most of all read books. He spent so much of his time devoted to them and his daughter. He loved having dinner with them and going to the park, singing, and building forts.

As a father, Rees was always available. He was tough when he expected results, but gentle when he knew he needed to provide love and support. His love for his family will always live on. He did not miss a sports or music event, any event for that matter. He gave one hundred percent of himself, one hundred percent of the time. He did not believe in settling for less. His daughter admired him for that. He did not care about fitting in or fitting a certain image to appease anyone. He was simply himself, without apology.

Rees was deeply involved with the church. He attended Fairfax Presbyterian Church for many years, and then Providence Presbyterian, both in Fairfax, Virginia. He devoted a lot of his time to singing in the church choirs and sang in a secular choir at Providence Presbyterian, led by Terry Stoneberg. His favorite piece to perform with them was "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" which was copyrighted on July 18, 1939, the same date Rees was born, six years later in 1945, and it premiered in The Wizard of Oz on August 25, 1939. August 25 is his grandson Cooper's birthday, so it became even more meaningful because of that. The song was also special because his daughter, Katie, performed it in the choir with him. Rees loved to sing. It was one of his favorite ways to express himself. Being part Welsh, Rees celebrated those roots through music and singing. He and his best buddies, Charlie Brown and Mike Egan, went Christmas Caroling at multiple venues every year. Katie would join when she could and sharing those performing moments together meant a lot to both of them.

Rees Made friends wherever he went and seamlessly maintained all his friendships, throughout the course of his life. The imprint he left in the hearts of those he surrounded himself with will never fade.

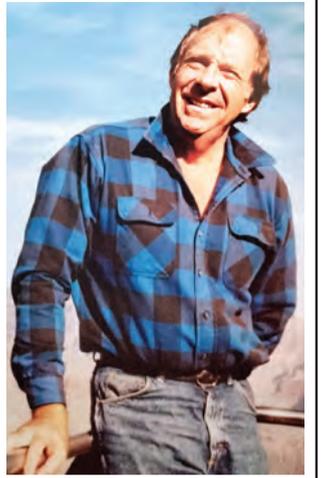
He was a world of knowledge with a boisterous voice, assertive and commanding. He loved classical music, music in general, and poetry, along with politics and debate. Rees was an avid Washington Redskins fan for years, and the former leader (Director) of the Washington Redskin Singers. He was playful, always playing practical jokes, and fun-loving, yet competitive, driven, and incredibly intelligent. Rees was, as many have described him, "larger than life" and "a force to be reckoned with".

Preceded in death by his parents, Russell Rees Llewellyn and Louise Hartman Llewellyn, Rees is survived by a brother, Col. Craig H. Llewellyn MD, USA (Ret.); two daughters, Aimee Rieger, and Kathryn McGee; and grandchildren Kennedy Grace and Cooper Patrick McGee (Kathryn's children).

Rees will be dearly missed but fondly remembered for his impact on both the world of music and in the hearts of those who were fortunate to know him. He lived a full life, and his legacy will live on.

The family will hold a Celebration of Life service for Rees, December 9, 2023, 11:00 AM at Providence Presbyterian Church, 9019 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax, VA 22031. The service will be followed by a reception at Esposito's Restaurant, 9917 Fairfax Blvd, Fairfax, VA 22030 from 1 PM to 4PM.

Flowers or cards can be sent to the church, or to the home of Kathryn McGee: 7832 Cedar Branch Dr. Gainesville VA. In lieu of flowers, the family requests contributions to the Virginia Music Teachers Association (<https://vmta-music.org/>).



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# Earp's Ordinary

FROM PAGE 2

"The restaurant is now completely built out, we've hired all our staff and have all our permits ready to go. We've committed to our employees and the community, and everyone's looking forward to us being open and successful."

Through December, Earp's will be open Fridays and weekends – including for Sunday jazz brunches – with a planned, full-time opening in January. Meanwhile, said DeMarco, "We had a community meeting there, last Sunday, Nov. 26, with friends, family and local officials. Afterward, they shared information about the fundraiser on social media, and donations started coming in on Monday."

DeMarco and Fairfax City's business community then made a video about it, last Wednesday, and more contributions arrived. That money is funding the food and beverages for the Dec. 8-10 event, and donations will still be welcomed and appreciated after the fundraiser.

In the video, Jinson Chan, owner of the nearby High Side beer bar and restaurant, said he and other Fairfax business owners want to make DeMarco's dreams for Earp's a reality. And Commonwealth Brewery General Manager Emily Wells said Earp's "isn't just a venue – it's a heartbeat of Fairfax."

Jana Klavina of Mara Studios, and Danielle Wade of Mode on Main by Mara, both urged the community to donate. By getting a ticket to the fundraiser, said Mobius Records owner Dempsey Hamilton, people "aren't just attending a great show," but, added Lucy Loves owner Sharon Buttram, "helping keep a local dream alive."

Old Town Fairfax Business Association Executive Director Tess Rollins called it "a show of community spirit." And Sucha Khamsawan, founder of Studio Ideya, said, "Together, we can make Fairfax a vibrant hub for music and culture."

Stressing that his heart and soul – plus lots of sweat and tears – have gone into creating Earp's, DeMarco said, "It's really heartwarming to know the community has embraced the concept of our tagline, 'Music, Spirits, Fare,' coming together in downtown. People not only like the vision but are providing the support needed to get it up and running."

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## ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 13

Saxophonist Lil' Maceo, an award-winning indie jazz saxophonist, whose performance style has been praised as "masterful class." Visit the website, [aldentheatre.org](http://aldentheatre.org).

### SATURDAY/DEC. 9

**Christmas Concert.** 4 p.m. At RCC Hunters Woods, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. Don't miss a moment of the music being made this year by The Reston Chorale. Join your friends and neighbors, bring the family and savor the musical feast. Experience the wonder of the season when The Reston Chorale presents two performances of holiday favorites. It's a musical treat for all ages! Free for active duty military and for youth (17 and younger) with a ticketed adult. Tickets are available at the CenterStage Box Office and online.

### DEC. 9-10

**"The Nutcracker."** 3 p.m. At Centreville High School, Clifton. The Mia Saunders School of Ballet will celebrate the 29th anniversary of its winter tradition of performing as a gift for others with The Nutcracker. Tickets are available at [MiaSaundersBallet.com](http://MiaSaundersBallet.com) for \$10 for children under 5 and \$12 for ages 6 & up. Proceeds benefit CVHS Drama Scholarships and The Plummer Home.

### SUNDAY/DEC. 10

**Beau Soir Ensemble.** 2 p.m. At The McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. This McLean-based trio returns by popular demand. This special concert will feature a flute, viola and piano trio!

### SUNDAY/DEC. 10

**Holiday Magic at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum.** 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. From 11-12:30 p.m. enjoy holiday crafts, hot chocolate and do some shopping in the gift shop. At 1:00 p.m., Mark Phillips of the Magic Duel will perform. After the show, children can create a gift for a parent or grandparent or just enjoy the Holiday Express Train that will be running that day. Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$3; ages 13 and older, \$5 (\$6 for special events); seniors 65+ and military (active and retired) \$4. For more information: <http://www.fairfax-sta->



The Beau Soir Ensemble will perform on Sunday, Dec. 10, 2023 at the McLean Community Center in McLean.

tion.org, <http://www.Facebook.com/FFXSRR>, 703-425-9225.

### SUNDAY/DEC. 10

**Mariachi Herencia de México: A Mariachi Christmas.** 3 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Representing a new generation of mariachi artists, Mariachi Herencia de México is a vibrant group of Mexican American musicians propelling the art and traditions of mariachi music to new heights. For the holidays, the ensemble brings the Latin American tradition of Las Posadas to the Center with songs of the season, such as "Feliz Navidad," "Los Peces en el Río," "Ave Maria," and more!

### TUESDAY/DEC. 12

**Holly Jolly Networking Mixer.** 6-8 p.m. At First National Bank Tysons Branch, 1497 Cornerstone Blvd., Suite 1500, Vienna. Get ready for an evening filled with more cheer than Santa's laugh and more networking opportunities than a Christmas tree has ornaments. They promise a sleigh-load of fun, laughter, and a chance to mingle with the who's who of the business world. Think of it as the North

Pole of networking – but with fewer elves and more business cards. Join them in spreading joy, making connections, and celebrating the holiday season in style.

### THURSDAY/DEC. 14

**Winter Wonderland 2023.** 6:30-8:30 p.m. At The Lake House, 11450 Baron Cameron Ave., Reston. Proceeds will benefit Fellowship Square, an organization improving the lives of older adults who struggle to make ends meet by providing affordable housing and supportive services.

### ARTSCREEN: A FREE FILM SERIES

#### CELEBRATING THE ARTS

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

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

## "Daze" Gone By



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As of the first week in Dec. 2023, I will have "churning out the dribble," as my late brother, Richard, teasingly characterized my columns a few years back, for 26 years. Almost without fail, except for one week in Aug., 15 when I was hospitalized for a week due to fluid build-up in my lungs (almost four liters worth). The fluid problem was a side effect of my cancer medication. (Imagine that, a side effect from cancer medication that nearly kills the patient. Who would have thought?) I was told by the attending physician that this side effect caused my lungs to collapse – with no guarantee that they would reinflate. Fortunately, a few days after my surgery to drain the fluid from my lungs, they miraculously re-inflated (later than the doctors had hoped/anticipated, but everybody was happy nonetheless, especially me). But then I was on my way to recuperating and the following week I was home eating solid food again and semi back to normal ('normal' being a relative term, as I was a lung cancer patient after all).

I have been writing a column in "The Connection" for almost exactly 26 years. Multiply the years times the 52 weeks per year the paper published means that I've been at this pursuit of my happiness (writing/publishing columns) without fail – except that one week I spent in SICU for my lungs (actually I did write a column that week while in hospital bed. However, I typed it on a device which due to operator error, never sent my column to the paper for publication), a grand total of 1,352 weeks/columns, if anyone is counting. And I certainly am if you're not. Remembering that my initial (inauspicious) appearance in *The Connection* was hardly met with any fanfare (I was told I was filler, and a one-column inch filler at that), I summarize that beginning simply and with a nod to Bob Dylan: I was so much younger then, I'm older than that now. Thank God! And still, undergoing cancer treatment. And moreover, "still churning out the dribble."

And I'm especially still thanking God, always a prudent precaution to take, because when I started writing this column, I was cancer-free and years away from becoming the "victim of soycumstance" you read about regularly. That unfortunate circumstance/diagnosis of stage IV non-small cell lung cancer (a terminator if there ever was one, not named Arnold Schwarzenegger) became my official reality late Feb. 2009, 12-plus years after I started publishing my slice-of-life-type column ("Daze of My Life") in the first place. To say this diagnosis was a shock is to minimize any and all things that shock. But I persevered and though I didn't sing it, I did invoke Diana Ross a time or two ("I will survive"). And lo and behold, here I am in 2023, slowly creeping up on my 15th "cancerversary." (You bet I'm going to 'creep,' I don't want to bring any unnecessary attention to the fact that I'm still alive, especially around Christmas where lists are often checked twice.)

Considering that a "13 month to two-years" prognosis – at age 54 and a half (out of the blue, a lifelong non-smoker, and minimal exposure to second-hand smoke), came along with the diagnosis, I figured I had to roll punches somehow and buck up and find a way to be positive about this horrifying negative. As a dear friend who exhibited this attitude would often say when prompted: "My attitude is just like my blood type: B+." I don't know what my blood type is exactly, but I do know what my attitude is. However, during those first few months of learning this diagnosis and then starting every-three-week chemotherapy, lab work, diagnostic scans, and face-to-face, in-person appointments, your dominant feeling/reaction to your predicament (mine anyway) is disbelief. Though I certainly was curious how this could have happened to me (given what I thought I knew about lung cancer and its cause, very little after all) I never wallowed in "woeing." I saw no future in dwelling on the past.

And for the past 13 years, ever since I shared my diagnosis with you in my June 2010 column entitled "Dying to Tell You, Sort Of", published approximately four months after I began treatment, I have written extensively, if not almost entirely about cancer. And oddly enough, writing about it, whether it's good, bad, or indifferent news still gives me a lift somehow. Since I don't woe is me, neither do I drone on about my challenges. Oh sure, I'll update you readers about any major, potentially life-altering cancer-related news. When I do so however, it's not important that it's me that's being written about (it's never about me, really). It's important because it's about the cancer. As I used to say when asked about my column's subject matter before I was diagnosed: "I'm just the driver. I'm writing about the car."

And even though the car, metaphorically speaking, has some major problems, it's still able to get me where I want to go. Of course the ride can get a bit bumpy at times, but I'm still driving, if you know what I mean?

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

## NEWS BRIEFS

FROM PAGE 7

from serious illness caused by flu. If you do get the flu, it can help make your symptoms less severe and reduce the risk that you are hospitalized or even die. Complications of flu can include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections and sinus infections.

People 6 months and older should get vaccinated against flu. For those who are at greater risk for severe flu complications, it is especially important to make time to get a flu vaccine, if you haven't already. Some examples of people at higher risk of flu complications include:

People 65 years and older are at higher risk of developing serious complications from flu compared to young, healthy adults. This is in part because of changes in immune defenses with increasing age.

If you are pregnant, you are at higher risk of potentially serious flu complications because of changes to your immune system, heart, and lungs. Flu may also be harmful for a developing baby.

Children younger than 5 years old—especially those younger than 2 years—and children with certain chronic health conditions (like asthma and diabetes), are at higher risk of developing potentially serious flu complications. Other children can still get very sick from flu, and they can spread it to people at higher risk.

People with chronic health conditions, some disabilities, and cancer, are at higher risk of developing potentially serious flu complications, and the flu can worsen these underlying medical conditions.

Certain groups of people, including certain racial and ethnic minorities, experience an unequal burden of severe flu outcomes. Long standing social and health inequities likely contribute to this. Learn more about Health Equity and Flu.

Find more information so you can take steps to prevent flu:

Find more information about flu vaccines this season.

Find flu vaccine near you at [vaccines.gov](http://vaccines.gov).

Learn about more ways to prevent flu and other respiratory viruses.

## BULLETIN BOARD

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

### TOWN GREEN FEATURES HOLIDAY DISPLAY LOTTERY SELECTIONS

It's beginning to look a lot like...multiple winter holidays as Vienna's first-ever holiday display lottery winners create their seasonal displays on the Town Green! The Town of Vienna's new holiday display lottery allows up to three displays meeting certain technical requirements to be placed on the Town Green near the Town's first live, cut Christmas tree, which

was lighted at this year's Church Street Holiday Stroll on Nov. 27. Three holiday display lottery applications were submitted this year, and all met the criteria for display. They are: A menorah submitted by Chabad Tysons to commemorate Hannukah. A lighted dreidel submitted by Jewish Moms of Vienna to commemorate Hannukah. A lighted display submitted by Shelley Mountjoy to commemorate the winter solstice. The menorah was installed on Tuesday, Nov. 28.

The dreidel was installed on Wednesday, Nov. 29 and the winter solstice display is expected to be installed on Monday, Dec. 4.

The entire community is invited to attend the menorah-lighting ceremony on Sunday, Dec. 10 at 5 p.m. on the Town Green. Vienna residents will have plenty of time to enjoy the holiday lights on the Town Green. All festive displays are permitted to remain on the Town Green Lawn until Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024.

# HOLIDAY SEASON

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



C4 Performing Arts dancers interpret “Winter Wonderland.” From left are Pauline Kabiling, Ida Petersen, Evelyn Gill, Emma Chase and sisters Hazel and Charlie Bass.



Daniels Run Elementary Singers perform “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree.”

## Fairfax City Rings in the Holiday Season



The GMU Tuba and Euphonium Ensemble entertains.



From left, friends Leona and Nora, both 5, enjoy petting a bunny.



Handbell players from the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax perform “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.”



Elena Sha, 4, with mom Phoebe Lao, is excited to help decorate this gingerbread house to be donated to the Katherine Hanley Family Shelter.